THE WORLD FOR SALE

GILBERT PARKER

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THE WORLD FOR SALE

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"WHAT DID YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAID THAT INGOLBY'S EYES WOULD NOT FEED UPON ME?" SHE ASKED IN A LOW TONE OF FEAR

THE WORLD FOR SALE

A NOVEL

BY

GILBERT PARKER

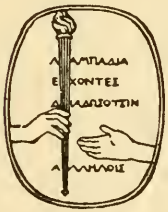
AUTHOR OF

"THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY" "THE RIGHT OF WAY"

"THE MONEY MASTER" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

ARTHUR I. KELLER



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THE WORLD FOR SALE

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H–Q

TO

MY BELOVED NIECES

KATHLEEN, JANE ELEANOR AND CAROLINE

NOTE

THIS book was written in 1911 and finished in 1912, a year before war broke out. It was published serially in the year 1915 and the beginning of 1916. It must, therefore, go to the public on the basis of its merits alone, and as a picture of the peace-life of the great North West.

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PRELUDE

HARVEST-TIME was almost come, and the great new land was resting under coverlets of gold. From the rise above the town of Lebanon, there stretched out ungarnered wheat in the ear as far as sight could reach, and the place itself, and the neighbouring town of Manitou on the other side of the Sagalac River were like islands washed by a topaz sea.

Standing upon the Rise, lost in the prospect, was an old, white-haired man in the cassock of a priest, with grey beard reaching nearly to the waist.

For long he surveyed the scene, and his eyes had a rapt look.

At last he spoke aloud:

"*There shall be an heap of corn in the earth, high upon the hills; his fruit shall shake like Libanus, and shall be green in the city like grass upon the earth.*"

A smile came to his lips—a rare, benevolent smile. He had seen this expanse of teeming life when it was thought to be an alkali desert, fit only to be invaded by the Blackfeet and the Cree and the Blood Indians on a foray for food and furs. Here he had come fifty years before, and had gone West and North into the mountains in the Summer season, when the land was tremulous with light and

vibrating to the hoofs of herds of buffalo as they stampeded from the hunters; and also in the Winter time, when Frost was master and blizzard and drift its malignant servants.

Even yet his work was not done. In the town of Manitou he still said mass now and then, and heard the sorrows and sins of men and women, and gave them "ghostly comfort," while priests younger than himself took the burden of parish-work from his shoulders.

For a lifetime he had laboured among the Indians and the few whites and squaw-men and half-breeds, with neither settlement nor progress. Then, all at once, the railway; and people coming from all the world, and cities springing up! Now once more he was living the life of civilization, exchanging raw flesh of fish and animals and a meal of tallow or pemmican for the wheaten loaf; the Indian tepee for the warm house with the mansard roof; the crude mass beneath the trees for the refinements of a chancel and an altar covered with lace and white linen.

A flock of geese went *honking* over his head. His eyes smiled in memory of the countless times he had watched such flights, had seen thousands of wild ducks hurrying down a valley, had watched a family of herons stretching away to some lonely water-home. And then another sound greeted his ear. It was shrill, sharp and insistent. A great serpent was stealing out of the East and moving down upon Lebanon. It gave out puffs of smoke from its ungainly head. It shrieked in triumph as

it came. It was the daily train from the East, arriving at the Sagalac River.

"These things must be," he said aloud as he looked.

While he lost himself again in reminiscence, a young man came driving across the plains, passing beneath where he stood. The young man's face and figure suggested power. In his buggy was a fishing-rod.

His hat was pulled down over his eyes, but he was humming cheerfully to himself. When he saw the priest, he raised his hat respectfully, yet with an air of equality.

"Good day, Monseigneur," (this honour of the Church had come at last to the aged missionary) he said warmly. "Good day—good day!"

The priest raised his hat and murmured the name, "Ingolby." As the distance grew between them, he said sadly: "These are the men who change the West, who seize it, and divide it, and make it their own——

"'*I will rejoice, and divide Sichem: and mete out the valley of Succoth.*'

"Hush! Hush!" he said to himself in reproach. "These things must be. The country must be opened up. That is why I came—to bring the Truth before the trader."

Now another traveller came riding out of Lebanon towards him, galloping his horse up-hill and down.

He also was young, but nothing about him suggested power, only self-indulgence. He, too, raised his hat, or rather swung it from his head in a devil-

may-care way, and overdid his salutation. He did not speak.

The priest's face was very grave, if not a little resentful. His salutation was reserved.

"The tyranny of gold," he murmured, "and without the mind or energy that created it. *Felix* was no name for him. Ingolby is a builder, perhaps a jerry-builder; but he builds."

He looked across the prairie towards the young man in the buggy.

"Sure, he is a builder. He has the Cortez eye. He sees far off, and plans big things. But Felix Marchand there——"

He stopped short.

"Such men must be, perhaps," he added. Then, after a moment, as he gazed round again upon the land of promise which he had loved so long, he murmured as one murmurs a prayer:

"*Thou sufferedst men to ride over our heads: we went through fire and water, and Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*"

BOOK I

THE WORLD FOR SALE

CHAPTER I

"THE DRUSES ARE UP!"

"GREAT Scott, look at her! She's goin' to try and take 'em!" exclaimed Osterhaut, the Jack-of-all-trades at Lebanon.

"She ain't such a fool as all that. Why, no one ever done it alone. Low water, too, when every rock's got its chance at the canoe. But, my gracious, she *is* goin' to ride 'em!"

Jowett, the horse-dealer, had a sportsman's joy in a daring thing.

"See, old Injun Tekewani 's after her! He's calling at her from the bank. He knows. He done it himself years ago when there was rips in the tribe an' he had to sew up the tears. He run them Rapids in his canoe——"

"Just as the Druse girl there is doin'——"

"An' he's done what he liked with the Blackfeet ever since."

"But she ain't a chief—what's the use of her doin' it? She's goin' straight for them. She can't turn

back now. She couldn't make the bank if she wanted to. She's got to run 'em. Holy smoke, see her wavin' the paddle at Tekewani! Osterhaut, she's the limit, that petticoat—so quiet and shy and don't-look-at-me, too, with eyes like brown diamonds."

"Oh, get out, Jowett; she's all right! She'll make this country sit up some day—by gorry, she'll make Manitou and Lebanon sit up to-day if she runs the Carillon Rapids safe!"

"She's runnin' 'em all right, son. She's—by jee, well done, Miss Druse! Well done, I say—well done!" exclaimed Jowett, dancing about and waving his arms towards the adventurous girl.

The girl had reached the angry, thrashing waters where the rocks rent and tore into white ribbons the onrushing current, and her first trial had come on the instant the spitting, raging panthers of foam struck the bow of her canoe. The waters were so low that this course, which she had made once before with her friend Tekewani the Blackfeet chief, had perils not met on that desperate journey. Her canoe struck a rock slantwise, shuddered and swung round, but by a dexterous stroke she freed the frail craft. It righted and plunged forward again into fresh death-traps.

It was these new dangers which had made Tekewani try to warn her from the shore—he and the dozen braves with him: but it was characteristic of his race that, after the first warning, when she must play out the game to the bitter end, he made no further attempt to stop her. The Indians ran down the river-bank, however, with eyes intent on her

headlong progress, grunting approval as she plunged safely from danger to danger.

Osterhaut and Jowett became silent, too, and, like the Indians, ran as fast as they could, over fences, through the trees, stumbling and occasionally cursing, but watching with fascinated eyes this adventuress of the North, taking chances which not one *coureur-de-bois* or river-driver in a thousand would take, with a five thousand-dollar prize as the lure. Why should she do it?

"Women folks are sich darn fools when they git goin'," gasped Osterhaut as he ran. "They don't care a split pea what happens when they've got the pip. Look at her—my hair's bleachin'."

"She's got the pip all right," stuttered Jowett as he plunged along; "but she's foreign, and they've all got the pip, foreign men and women both—but the women go crazy."

"She keeps pretty cool for a crazy loon, that girl. If I owned her, I'd——"

Jowett interrupted impatiently. "You'd do what old man Druse does—you'd let her be, Osterhaut. What's the good of havin' your own way with one that's the apple of your eye, if it turns her agin you? You want her to kiss you on the high cheek-bone, but if you go to play the cat-o'-nine-tails round her, the high cheek-bone gets froze. Gol blast it, look at her, son! What are the wild waves saying? They're sayin', 'This is a surprise, Miss Druse. Not quite ready for ye, Miss Druse.' My, ain't she got the luck of the old devil!"

It seemed so. More than once the canoe half

jammed between the rocks, and the stern lifted up by the force of the wild current, but again the paddle made swift play, and again the cockle-shell swung clear. But now Fleda Druse was no longer on her feet. She knelt, her strong, slim brown arms bared to the shoulder, her hair blown about her forehead, her daring eyes flashing to left and right, memory of her course at work under such a strain as few can endure without chaos of mind in the end. A hundred times since the day she had run these Rapids with Tekewani, she had gone over the course in her mind, asleep and awake, forcing her brain to see again every yard of that watery way; because she knew that the day must come when she would make the journey alone. Why she would make it she did not know; she only knew that she would do it some day: and the day had come. For long it had been an obsession with her—as though some spirit whispered in her ear—"*Do you hear the bells ringing at Carillon? Do you hear the river singing towards Carillon? Do you see the wild birds flying towards Carillon? Do you hear the Rapids calling—the Rapids of Carillon?*"

Night and day since she had braved death with Tekewani, giving him a gun, a meerschaum pipe, and ten pounds of beautiful brown "plug" tobacco as a token of her gratitude—night and day she had heard this spirit murmuring in her ear, and always the refrain was, "Down the stream to Carillon! Shoot the Rapids of Carillon!"

Why? How should she know? Wherefore should she know? This was of the things beyond

the why of the human mind. Sometimes all our lives, if we keep our souls young, and see the world as we first saw it with eyes and heart unsoiled, we hear the murmuring of the Other Self, that Self from which we separated when we entered this mortal sphere, but which followed us, invisible yet whispering inspiration to us. But sometimes we only hear It, our own soul's oracle, while yet our years are few, and we have not passed that frontier between innocence and experience, reality and pretence. Pretence it is which drives the Other Self away with wailing on its lips. Then we hear It cry in the night when, because of the trouble of life, we cannot sleep; or at the play when we are caught away from ourselves into another air than ours; when music pours around us like a soft wind from a garden of pomegranates; or when a child asks a question which brings us back to the land where everything is so true that it can be shouted from the tree-tops.

Why was Fleda Druse tempting death in the Carillon Rapids?

She had heard a whisper as she wandered among the pine-trees there at Manitou, and it said simply the one word, "*Now!*" She knew that she must do it; she had driven her canoe out into the resistless current to ride the Rapids of Carillon. Her Other Self had whispered to her.

Yonder, thousands of miles away in Syria, there were the Hills of Lebanon; and there was one phrase which made every Syrian heart beat faster, if he were on the march. It was, "The Druses are up!" When that wild tribe took to the saddle to war upon

the Caravans and against authority, from Lebanon to Palmyra, from Jerusalem to Damascus men looked anxiously about them and rode hard to refuge.

And here also in the Far North where the River Sagalac ran a wild race to Carillon, leaving behind the new towns of Lebanon and Manitou, "the Druses were up."

The daughter of Gabriel Druse, the giant, was riding the Rapids of the Sagalac. The suspense to her and to those who watched her course—to Tekewani and his braves, to Osterhaut and Jowett—could not be long. It was a matter of minutes only, in which every second was a miracle and might be a catastrophe.

From rock to rock, from wild white water to wild white water she sped, now tossing to death as it seemed, now shooting on safely to the next test of skill and courage—on, on, till at last there was only one passage to make before the canoe would plunge into the smooth water running with great swiftness till it almost reached Carillon.

Suddenly, as she neared the last dangerous point, round which she must swing between jagged and unseen barriers of rock, her sight became for an instant dimmed, as though a cloud passed over her eyes. She had never fainted in her life, but it seemed to her now that she was hovering on unconsciousness. Commending the will and energy left, she fought the weakness down. It was as though she forced a way through tossing, buffeting shadows; as though she was shaking off from her shoulders shadowy hands which sought to detain her; as

though smothering things kept choking back her breath, and darkness like clouds of wool gathered about her face. She was fighting for her life, and for years it seemed to be; though indeed it was only seconds before her will reasserted itself, and light broke again upon her way. Even on the verge of the last ambushed passage her senses came back; but they came with a stark realization of the peril ahead: it looked out of her eyes as a face shows itself at the window of a burning building.

Memory shook itself free. It pierced the tumult of waters, found the ambushed rocks, and guided the lithe brown arms and hands, so that the swift paddle drove the canoe straight onward, as a fish drives itself through a flume of dragon's teeth beneath the flood. The canoe quivered for an instant at the last cataract, then responding to Memory and Will, sped through the hidden chasm, tossed by spray and water, and swept into the swift current of smooth water below.

Fleda Druse had run the Rapids of Carillon. She could hear the bells ringing for evening service in the Catholic Church of Carillon, and bells—soft, booming bells—were ringing in her own brain. Like muffled silver these brain-bells were, and she was as one who enters into a deep forest, and hears far away in the boscage the mystic summons of forest deities. Voices from the banks of the river behind called to her—hilarious, approving, agitated voices of her Indian friends, and of Osterhaut and Jowett, those wild spectators of her adventure;

but they were not wholly real. Only those soft, booming bells in her brain were real.

Shooting the Rapids of Carillon was the bridge by which she passed from the world she had left to this other. Her girlhood was ended—wondering, hovering, unrealizing girlhood. This adventure was the outward sign, the rite in the Lodge of Life which passed her from one degree of being to another.

She was safe; but now as her canoe shot onward to the town of Carillon, her senses again grew faint. Again she felt the buffeting mist, again her face was muffled in smothering folds; again great hands reached out towards her; again her eyes were drawn into a stupefying darkness; but now there was no will to fight, no energy to resist. The paddle lay inert in her fingers, her head drooped. She slowly raised her head once, twice, as though the call of the exhausted will was heard, but suddenly it fell heavily upon her breast. For a moment so, and then as the canoe shot forward on a fresh current, the lithe body sank backwards in the canoe, and lay face upward to the evening sky.

The canoe sped on, but presently it swung round and lay athwart the current, dipping and rolling.

From the banks on either side, the Indians of the Manitou Reservation and the two men from Lebanon called out and hastened on, for they saw that the girl had collapsed, and they knew only too well that her danger was not yet past. The canoe might strike against the piers of the bridge at Carillon and overturn, or it might be carried to the second cata-

ract below the town. They were too far away to save her, but they kept shouting as they ran.

None responded to their call, but that defiance of the last cataract of the Rapids of Carillon had been seen by one who, below an eddy on the Lebanon side of the river, was steadily stringing upon maple-twigs, black bass and long-nosed pike. As he sat in the shade of the trees, he had seen the plunge of the canoe into the chasm, and had held his breath in wonder and admiration. Even at that distance he knew who it was. He had seen Fleda only a few times before, for she was little abroad; but when he had seen her he had asked himself what such a face and form were doing in the Far North. It belonged to Andalusia, to the Carpathians, to Syrian villages.

"The pluck of the very devil!" he had exclaimed, as Fleda's canoe swept into the smooth current, free of the dragon's teeth; and as he had something of the devil in himself, she seemed much nearer to him than the hundreds of yards of water intervening. Presently, however, he saw her droop and sink away out of sight.

For an instant he did not realize what had happened, and then, with angry self-reproach, he flung the oars into the rowlocks of his skiff and drove down and athwart the stream with long, powerful strokes.

"That's like a woman!" he said to himself as he bent to the oars, and now and then turned his head to make sure that the canoe was still safe. "Do the trick better than a man, and then collapse like a rabbit."

He was Max Ingolby, the financier, contractor, manager of great interests, disturber of the peace of slow minds, who had come to Lebanon with the avowed object of amalgamating three railways, of making the place the swivel of all the trade and interests of the Western North; but also with the declared intention of uniting Lebanon and Manitou in one municipality, one centre of commercial and industrial power.

Men said he had bitten off more than he could chew, but he had replied that his teeth were good, and he would masticate the meal or know the reason why. He was only thirty-three, but his will was like nothing the West had seen as yet. It was sublime in its confidence, it was free from conceit, and it knew not the word despair, though once or twice it had known defeat.

Men cheered him from the shore as his skiff leaped through the water. "It's that blessed Ingolby," said Jowett, who had tried to "do" the financier in a horse-deal, and had been done instead, and was now a devout admirer and adherent of the Master Man. "I saw him driving down there this morning from Lebanon. He's been fishing at Seely's Eddy."

"When Ingolby goes fishing, there's trouble goin' on somewhere and he's stalkin' it," rejoined Osterhaut. "But, by gol, he's goin' to do this trump trick first; he's goin' to overhaul her before she gits to the bridge. Look at him swing! Hell, ain't it pretty! There you go, old Ingolby. You're right on it, even when you're fishing."

On the other—the Manitou—shore Tekewani and his braves were less talkative, but they were more concerned in the incident than Osterhaut and Jowett. They knew little or nothing of Ingolby the hustler, but they knew more of Fleda Druse and her father than all the people of Lebanon and Manitou put together. Fleda had won old Tekewani's heart when she had asked him to take her down the Rapids, for the days of adventure for him and his tribe were over. The adventure shared with this girl had brought back to the chief the old days when Indian women tanned bearskins and deerskins day in, day out, and made pemmican of the buffalo-meat; when the years were filled with hunting and war and migrant journeyings to fresh game-grounds and pastures new.

Danger faced was the one thing which could restore Tekewani's self-respect, after he had been checked and rebuked before his tribe by the Indian Commissioner for being drunk. Danger faced had restored it, and Fleda Druse had brought the danger to him as a gift.

If the canoe should crash against the piers of the bridge, if it should drift to the cataract below, if anything should happen to this white girl whom he worshipped in his heathen way, nothing could preserve his self-respect; he would pour ashes on his head and fire-water down his throat.

Suddenly he and his braves stood still. They watched as one would watch an enemy a hundred times stronger than one's self. The white man's skiff was near the derelict canoe; the bridge was near

also. Carillon now lined the bank of the river with its people. They ran upon the bridge, but not so fast as to reach the place where, in the nick of time, Ingolby got possession of the rolling canoe; where Fleda Druse lay waiting like a princess to be waked by the kiss of destiny.

Only five hundred yards below the bridge was the second cataract, and she would never have waked if she had been carried into it.

To Ingolby she was as beautiful as a human being could be as she lay with white face upturned, the paddle still in her hand.

"Drowning isn't good enough for her," he said, as he fastened her canoe to his skiff.

"It's been a full day's work," he added; and even in this human crisis he thought of the fish he had caught, of "the big trouble" he had been thinking out as Osterhaut had said, as well as of the girl that he was saving.

"I always have luck when I go fishing," he added presently. "I can take her back to Lebanon," he continued with a quickening look. "She'll be all right in a jiffy. I've got room for her in my buggy —and room for her in any place that belongs to me," he hastened to reflect with a curious, bashful smile.

"It's like a thing in a book," he murmured, as he neared the waiting people on the banks of Carillon, and the ringing of the vesper bells came out to him on the evening air.

"Is she dead?" some one whispered, as eager hands reached out to secure his skiff to the bank.

"As dead as I am," he answered with a laugh, and drew Fleda's canoe up alongside his skiff.

He had a strange sensation of new life, as, with delicacy and gentleness, he lifted her up in his strong arms and stepped ashore.

CHAPTER II

THE WHISPER FROM BEYOND

INGOLBY had a will of his own, but it had never been really tried against a woman's will. It was, however, tried sorely when Fleda came to consciousness again in his arms and realized that a man's face was nearer to hers than any man's had ever been except that of her own father. Her eyes opened slowly, and for the instant she did not understand, but when she did, the blood stole swiftly back to her neck and face and forehead, and she started in dismay.

"Put me down," she whispered faintly.

"I'm taking you to my buggy," he replied. "I'll drive you back to Lebanon." He spoke as calmly as he could, for there was a strange fluttering of his nerves, and the crowd was pressing him.

"Put me down at once," she said peremptorily.

She trembled on her feet, and swayed, and would have fallen but that Ingolby and a woman in black, who had pushed her way through the crowd with white, anxious face, caught her.

"Give her air, and stand back!" called the sharp voice of the constable of Carillon, and he heaved the people back with his powerful shoulders.

A space was cleared round the place where Fleda sat with her head against the shoulder of the stately woman in black who had come to her assistance. A dipper of water was brought, and when she had drunk it she raised her head slowly and her eyes sought those of Ingolby.

"One cannot pay for such things," she said to him, meeting his look firmly and steeling herself to thank him. Though deeply grateful, it was a trial beyond telling to be obliged to owe the debt of a life to any one, and in particular to a man of the sort to whom material gifts could not be given.

"Such things are paid for just by accepting them," he answered quickly, trying to feel that he had never held her in his arms, as she evidently desired him to feel. He had intuition, if not enough of it, for the regions where the mind of Fleda Druse dwelt.

"I couldn't very well decline, could I?" she rejoined, quick humour shooting into her eyes. "I was helpless. I never fainted before in my life."

"I am sure you will never faint again," he remarked. "We only do such things when we are very young."

She was about to reply, but paused reflectively. Her half-opened lips did not frame the words she had been impelled to speak.

Admiration was alive in his eyes. He had never seen this type of womanhood before—such energy and grace, so amply yet so lithely framed; such darkness and fairness in one living composition; such individuality, yet such intimate simplicity. Her hair was a very light brown, sweeping over a

broad, low forehead, and lying, as though with a sense of modesty, on the tips of the ears, veiling them slightly. The forehead was classic in its intellectual fulness; but the skin was so fresh, even when pale as now, and with such an underglow of vitality that the woman in her, sex and the possibilities of sex, cast a glamour over the intellect and temperament showing in every line of her contour. In contrast to the light brown of the hair was the very dark brown of the eyes and the still darker brown of the eyelashes. The face shone, the eyes burned, and the piquancy of the contrast between the soft illuminating whiteness of the skin and the flame in the eyes had fascinated many more than Ingolby.

Her figure was straight yet supple, somewhat fuller than is modern beauty, with hints of Juno-like stateliness to come; and the curves of her bust, the long lines of her limbs, were not obscured by her absolutely plain gown of soft, light-brown linen. She was tall, but not too commanding, and, as her hand was raised to fasten back a wisp of hair, there was the motion of as small a wrist and as tapering a bare arm as ever made prisoner of a man's neck.

Impulse was written in every feature, in the passionate eagerness of her body; yet the line from the forehead to the chin, and the firm shapeliness of the chin itself, gave promise of great strength of will. From the glory of the crown of hair to the curve of the high instep of a slim foot it was altogether a personality which hinted at history—at tragedy, maybe.

"She'll have a history," Madame Bulteel, who now stood beside the girl, herself a figure out of a picture by Velasquez, had said of her sadly; for she saw in Fleda's rare qualities, in her strange beauty, happenings which had nothing to do with the life she was living. So this duenna of Gabriel Druse's household, this aristocratic, silent woman was ever on the watch for some sudden revelation of a being which had not found itself, and which must find itself through perils and convulsions.

That was why, to-day, she had hesitated to leave Fleda alone and come to Carillon, to be at the bedside of a dying, friendless woman whom by chance she had come to know. In the street she had heard of what was happening on the river, and had come in time to receive Fleda from the arms of her rescuer.

"How did you get here?" Fleda asked her.

"How am I always with you when I am needed, truant?" said the other with a reproachful look.

"Did you fly? You are so light, so thin, you could *breathe* yourself here," rejoined the girl, with a gentle, quizzical smile. "But, no," she added, "I remember, you were to be here at Carillon."

"Are you able to walk now?" asked Madame Bulteel.

"To Manitou—but of course," Fleda answered almost sharply.

After the first few minutes the crowd had fallen back. They watched her with respectful admiration from a decent distance. They had the chivalry towards woman so characteristic of the West. There was no vulgarity in their curiosity, though

most of them had never seen her before. All, however, had heard of her and her father, the giant greybeard who moved and lived in an air of mystery, and apparently secret wealth, for more than once he had given large sums—large in the eyes of folks of moderate means, when charity was needed; as in the case of the floods the year before, and in the prairie-fire the year before that, when so many people were made homeless, and also when fifty men had been injured in one railway accident. On these occasions he gave disproportionately to his mode of life.

Now, when they saw that Fleda was about to move away, they drew just a little nearer, and presently one of the crowd could contain his admiration no longer. He raised a cheer.

"Three cheers for Her," he shouted, and loud hurrahs followed.

"Three cheers for Ingolby," another cried, and the noise was boisterous but not so general.

"Who shot Carillon Rapids?" another called in the formula of the West.

"*She* shot the Rapids," was the choral reply.

"Who is she?" came the antiphon.

"Druse is her name," was the gay response.

"What did she do?"

"She shot Carillon Rapids—shot 'em dead. Hooray!" In the middle of the cheering, Osterhaut and Jowett arrived in a wagon which they had commandeered, and, about the same time, from across the bridge, came running Tekewani and his braves.

"She done it like a kingfisher," cried Osterhaut. "Manitou's got the belt."

Fleda Druse's friendly eyes were given only for one instant to Osterhaut and his friend. Her gaze became fixed on Tekewani who, silent, and with immobile face, stole towards her. In spite of the civilization which controlled him, he wore Indian moccasins and deerskin breeches, though his coat was rather like a shortened workman's blouse. He did not belong to the life about him; he was a being apart, the spirit of vanished and vanishing days.

"Tekewani—ah, Tekewani, you have come," the girl said, and her eyes smiled at him as they had not smiled at Ingolby or even at the woman in black beside her.

"*How!*" the chief replied, and looked at her with searching, worshipping eyes.

"Don't look at me that way, Tekewani," she said, coming close to him. "I had to do it, and I did it."

"The teeth of rock everywhere!" he rejoined reproachfully, with a gesture of awe.

"I remembered all—all. You were my master, Tekewani."

"But only once with me it was, Summer Song," he persisted. Summer Song was his name for her.

"I saw it—saw it, every foot of the way," she insisted. "I thought hard, oh, hard as the soul thinks. And I saw it all." There was something singularly akin in the nature of the girl and the Indian. She spoke to him as she never spoke to any other.

"Too much seeing, it is death," he answered.

"Men die with too much seeing. I have seen them die. To look hard through deerskin curtains, to see through the rock, to behold the water beneath the earth, and the rocks beneath the black waters, it is for man to see if he has a soul, but the seeing—behold, so those die who should live!"

"I live, Tekewani, though I saw the teeth of rocks beneath the black water," she urged gently.

"Yet the half-death came——"

"I fainted, but I was not to die—it was not my time."

He shook his head gloomily. "Once it may be, but the evil spirits tempt us to death. It matters not what comes to Tekewani; he is as the leaf that falls from the stem; but for Summer Song that has far to go, it is the madness from beyond the Hills of Life."

She took his hand. "I will not do it again, Tekewani."

"*How!*" he said, with hand upraised, as one who greets the great in this world.

"I don't know why I did it," she added meaningly. "It was selfish. I feel that now."

The woman in black pressed her hand timidly.

"It is so for ever with the great," Tekewani answered. "It comes, also, from beyond the Hills—the will to do it. It is the spirit that whispers over the earth out of the Other Earth. No one hears it but the great. The whisper only is for this one here and that one there who is of the Few. It whispers, and the whisper must be obeyed. So it was from the beginning."

"Yes, you understand, Tekewani," she answered softly. "I did it because something whispered from the Other Earth to me."

Her head drooped a little, her eyes had a sudden shadow.

"He will understand," answered the Indian; "your father will understand," as though reading her thoughts.

He had clearly read her thought, this dispossessed, illiterate Indian chieftain. Yet, was he so illiterate? Had he not read in books which so few have learned to read? His life had been broken on the rock of civilization, but his simple soul had learned some elemental truths—not many, but the essential ones, without which there is no philosophy, no understanding. He knew Fleda Druse was thinking of her father, wondering if he would understand, half-fearing, hardly hoping, dreading the moment when she must meet him face to face. She knew she had been selfish, but would Gabriel Druse understand? She raised her eyes in gratitude to the Blackfeet chief.

"I must go home," she said.

She turned to go, but as she did so, a man came swaggering down the street, broke through the crowd, and made towards her with an arm raised, a hand waving, and a leer on his face. He was a thin, rather handsome, dissolute-looking fellow of middle height and about forty, in dandified dress. His glossy black hair fell carelessly over his smooth forehead from under a soft, wide-awake hat.

"Manitou for ever!" he cried, with a flourish

of his hand. "I salute the brave. I escort the brave to the gates of Manitou. I escort the brave. I escort the brave. *Salut! Salut! Salut!* Well done, Beauty! Beauty — Beauty — Beauty, well done again!"

He held out his hand to Fleda, but she drew back with disgust. Felix Marchand, the son of old Hector Marchand, money-lender and capitalist of Manitou, had pressed his attentions upon her during the last year since he had returned from the East, bringing dissoluteness and vulgar pride with him. Women had spoiled him, money had corrupted and degraded him.

"Come, beautiful brave, it's *Salut! Salut! Salut!*" he said, bending towards her familiarly.

Her face flushed with anger.

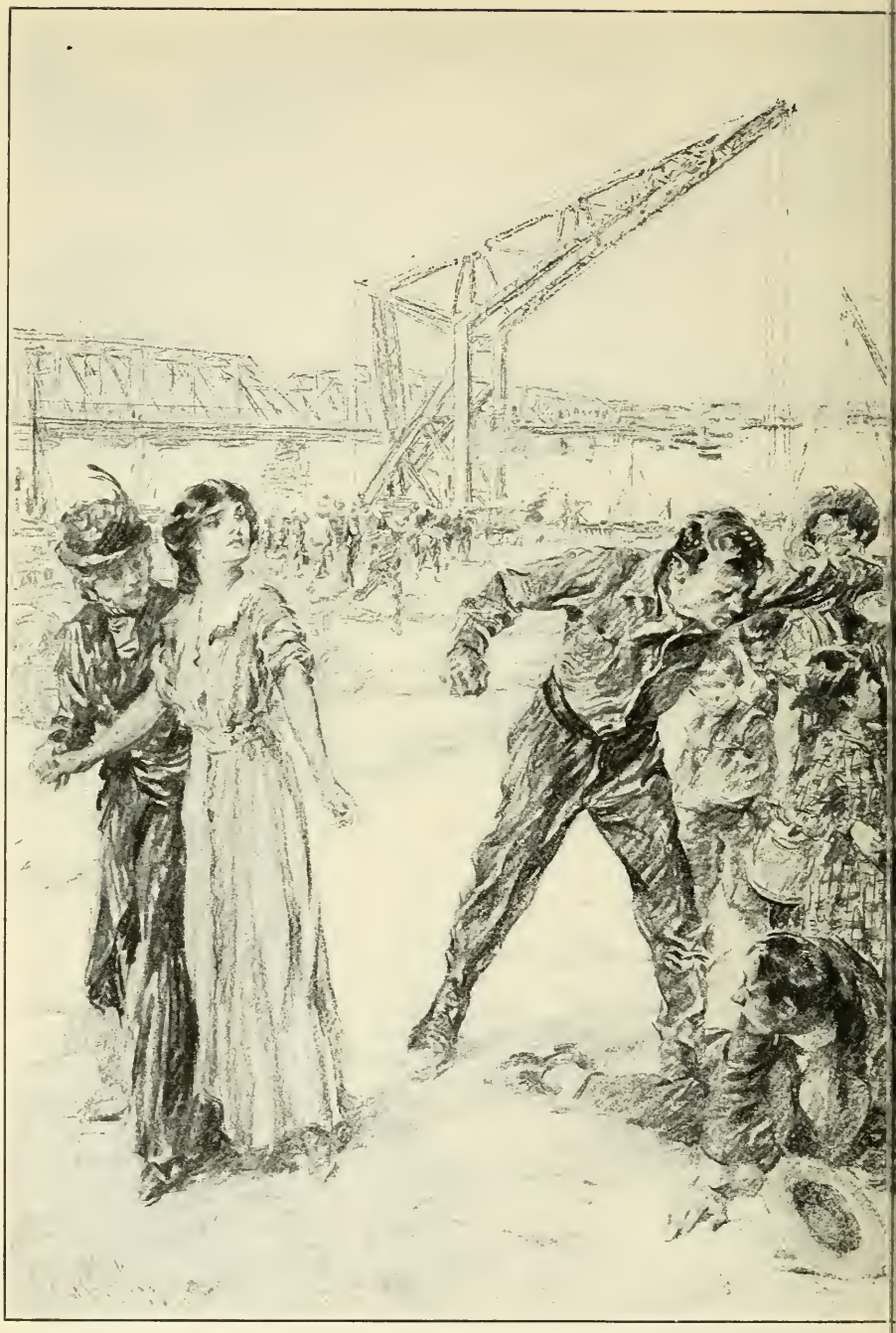
"Let me pass, monsieur," she said sharply.

"Pride of Manitou——" he apostrophized, but got no farther.

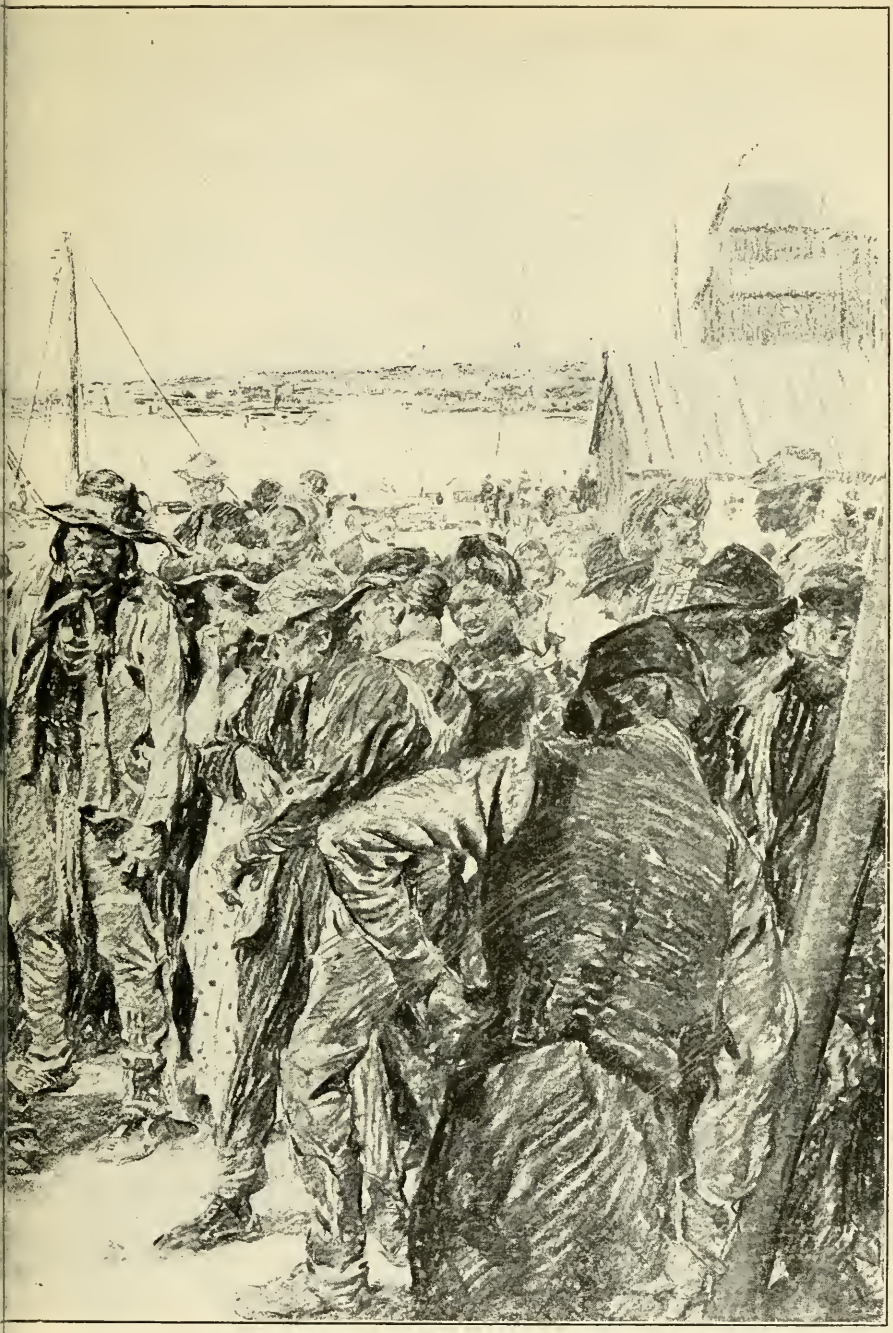
Ingolby caught him by the shoulders, wheeled him round, and then flung him at the feet of Tekewani and his braves.

At this moment Tekewani's eyes had such a fire as might burn in Wotan's smithy. He was ready enough to defy the penalty of the law for assaulting a white man, but Felix Marchand was in the dust, and that would do for the moment.

With grim face Ingolby stood over the begrimed figure. "There's the river if you want more," he said. "Tekewani knows where the water's deepest." Then he turned and followed Fleda and the woman in black.



WITH GRIM FACE INGOLBY STOOD OVER THE BEGRIMED FIGURE. "WHERE THE WATER'S DEEPEST"



ERE'S THE RIVER IF YOU WANT MORE," HE SAID. "TEKEWANI KNOWS

Felix Marchand's face was twisted with hate as he got slowly to his feet.

"You'll eat dust before I'm done," he called after Ingolby. Then, amid the jeers of the crowd, he went back to the tavern where he had been carousing.

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING INGOLBY AND THE TWO TOWNS

A WORD about Max Ingolby.

He was the second son of four sons, with a father who had been a failure; but with a mother of imagination and great natural strength of brain, yet whose life had been so harried in bringing up a family on nothing at all, that there only emerged from her possibilities a great will to do the impossible things. From her had come the spirit which would not be denied.

In his boyhood Max could not have those things which boys prize—fishing-rods, cricket-bats and sleds, and all such things; but he could take most prizes at school open to competition; he could win in the running-jump, the high-jump and the five hundred yards' race; and he could organize a picnic, or the sports of the school or town—at no cost to himself. His finance in even this limited field had been brilliant. Other people paid, and he did the work; and he did it with such ease that the others intriguing to crowd him out, suffered failure and came to him in the end to put things right.

He became the village doctor's assistant and dis-

penser at seventeen and induced his master to start a drug-store. He made the drug-store a success within two years, and meanwhile he studied Latin and Greek and mathematics in every spare hour he had—getting up at five in the morning, and doing as much before breakfast as others did in a whole day. His doctor loved him and helped him; a venerable Archdeacon, an Oxford graduate, gave him many hours of coaching, and he went to the University with three scholarships. These were sufficient to carry him through in three years, and there was enough profit-sharing from the drug-business he had founded on terms to shelter his mother and his younger brothers, while he took honours at the University.

There he organized all that students organize, and was called in at last by the Bursar of his college to re-organize the commissariat, which he did with such success that the college saved five thousand dollars a year. He had genius, the college people said, and after he had taken his degree with honours in classics and mathematics they offered him a professorship at two thousand dollars a year.

He laughed ironically, but yet with satisfaction, when the professorship was offered. It was all so different from what was in his mind for the future. As he looked out of the oriel window in the sweet gothic building, to the green grass and the maples and elms which made the college grounds like an old-world park, he had a vision of himself permanently in these surroundings of refinement growing venerable with years, seeing pass under his influence

thousands of young men directed, developed and inspired by him.

He had, however, shaken himself free of this modest vision. He knew that such a life would act like a narcotic to his real individuality. He thirsted for contest, for the control of brain and will; he wanted to construct; he was filled with the idea of simplifying things, of economizing strength; he saw how futile was much competition, and how the big brain could command and control with ease, wasting no force, saving labour, making the things controlled bigger and better.

So it came that his face was seen no more in the oriel window. With a mere handful of dollars, and some debts, he left the world of scholarship and superior pedagogy, and went where the head offices of railways were. Railways were the symbol of progress in his mind. The railhead was the advance post of civilization. It was like Cortez and his Conquistadores overhauling and appropriating the treasures of long generations. So where should he go if not to the Railway?

His first act, when he got to his feet inside the offices of the President of a big railway, was to show the great man how two "outside" proposed lines could be made one, and then further merged into the company controlled by the millionaire in whose office he sat. He got his chance by his very audacity—the President liked audacity. In attempting this merger, however, he had his first failure, but he showed that he could think for himself, and he was made increasingly responsible. After a

few years of notable service, he was offered the task of building a branch line of railway from Lebanon and Manitou north, and north-west, and on to the Coast; and he had accepted it, at the same time planning to merge certain outside lines competing with that which he had in hand. For over four years he worked night and day, steadily advancing towards his goal, breaking down opposition, manœuvring, conciliating, fighting.

Most men loved his whimsical turn of mind, even those who were the agents of the financial clique which had fought him in their efforts to get control of the commercial, industrial, transport and banking resources of the junction city of Lebanon. In the days when vast markets would be established for Canadian wheat in Shanghai and Tokio, then these two towns of Manitou and Lebanon on the Sagalac would be like the swivel to the organization of trade of a continent.

Ingolby had worked with this end in view. In doing so he had tried to get what he wanted without trickery; to reach his goal by playing the game according to the rules, and this policy nonplussed his rivals and associates. They expected secret moves, and he laid his cards on the table. Sharp, quick, resolute and ruthless, he was, however, if he knew that he was being tricked. Then he struck, and struck hard. The war of business was war and not "gollyfoxing," as he said.

Selfish, stubborn and self-centred he was in much, but he had great joy in the natural and sincere, and he had a passionate love of Nature. To him the

flat prairie was never ugly. Its very monotony had its own individuality. The Sagalac, even when muddy had its own deep interest, and when it was full of logs drifting down to the sawmills, for which he had found the money by interesting capitalists in the East, he sniffed the stinging smell of the pines with elation. As the great saws in the mills, for which he had secured the capital, throwing off the spray of mangled wood, hummed and buzzed and sang, his mouth twisted in the droll smile it always wore when he talked with such as Jowett and Osterhaut, whose idiosyncrasies were like a meal to him; as he described it once to some of the big men from the East who had been behind his schemes, yet who cavilled at his ways. He was never diverted from his course by such men, and while he was loyal to those who had backed him, he vowed that he would be independent of these wooden souls in the end. They and the great bankers behind them were for monopoly; he was for organization and for economic prudence. So far they were necessary to all he did; but it was his intention to shake himself free of all monopoly in good time. One or two of his colleagues saw the drift of his policy and would have thrown him over, if they could have replaced him by a man as capable, who would, at the time, consent to grow rich on their terms.

They could not understand a man who would stand for a half-hour watching a sunset, or a morning sky dappled with all the colours that shake from a prism; they were suspicious of a business-mind which could gloat over the light falling on snow-peaked

mountains, while it planned a great bridge across a gorge in the same hour; of a man who would quote a verse of poetry while a flock of wild pigeons went whirring down a pine-girt valley in the shimmer of the sun.

On the occasion when he had quoted a verse of poetry to them, one of them said to him, with a sidelong glance, "You seem to be dead-struck on Nature, Ingolby."

To that, with a sly quirk of the mouth, and meaning to mystify his wooden-headed questioner still more, he answered: "Dead-struck? Dead-drunk, you mean. I'm a Nature's dipsomaniac—as you can see," he added with a sly note of irony.

Then instantly he had drawn the little circle of experts into a discussion upon technical questions of railway-buildings and finance, which made demands upon all their resources and knowledge. In that conference he gave especial attention to the snub-souled financier who had sneered at his love of Nature. He tied his critic up in knots of self-assertion and bad logic which presently he deftly, deliberately and skilfully untied, to the delight of all the group.

"He's got as much in his ten years in the business as we've got out of half a life-time," said the chief of his admirers. This was the President who had first welcomed him into business, and introduced him to his colleagues in enterprise.

"I shouldn't be surprised if the belt flew off the wheel some day," savagely said Ingolby's snub-souled critic, whose enmity was held in check by the

fact that on Ingolby, for the moment, depended the safety of the hard cash he had invested.

But the qualities which alienated an expert here and there caught the imagination of the pioneer spirits of Lebanon. Except those who, for financial reasons, were opposed to him, and must therefore pit themselves against him, as the representatives of bigger forces behind them, he was a leader of whom Lebanon was combatively proud. At last he came to the point where his merger was practically accomplished, and a problem arising out of it had to be solved. It was a problem which taxed every quality of an able mind.

The situation had at last become acute, and Time, the solvent of most complications, had not quite eased the strain. Indeed, on the day that Fleda Druse had made her journey down the Carillon Rapids, Time's influence had not availed. So he had gone fishing, with millions at stake—to the despair of those who were risking all on his skill and judgment.

But that was Ingolby. Thinking was the essence of his business, not Time. As fishing was the friend of thinking, therefore he fished in Seely's Eddy, saw Fleda Druse run the Carillon Rapids, saved her from drowning and would have brought her in pride and peace to her own home, but that she decreed otherwise.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMING OF JETHRO FAWE

GABRIEL DRUSE'S house stood on a little knoll on the outskirts of the town of Manitou, backed by a grove of pines. Its front windows faced the Sagalac, and the windows behind looked into cool coverts where in old days many Indian tribes had camped; where Hudson's Bay Company's men had pitched their tents to buy the red man's furs. But the red man no longer set up his tepee in these secluded groves; the wapiti and red deer had fled to the north never to return, the snarling wolf had stolen into regions more barren; the ceremonial of the ancient people no longer made weird the lonely nights; the medicine-man's incantations, the harvest-dance, the green-corn-dance, the sun-dance had gone. The braves, their women, and their tepees had been shifted to reservations where Governments solemnly tried to teach them to till the field, and grow corn, and drive the cart to market; while yet they remembered the herds of buffalo which had pounded down the prairie like storm-clouds and given their hides for the tepee; and the swift deer whose skins made the wigwam luxurious.

Originally Manitou had been the home of Icelanders, Mennonites, and Doukhobors; settlers from lands where the conditions of earlier centuries prevailed, who, simple as they were in habits and in life, were ignorant, primitive, coarse, and none too cleanly. They had formed an unprogressive polyglot settlement, and the place assumed a still more primeval character when the Indian Reservation was formed near by. When French Canadian settlers arrived, however, the place became less discordant to the life of a new democracy, though they did little to make it modern in the sense that Lebanon, across the river, where Ingolby lived, was modern from the day the first shack was thrown up.

Manitou showed itself antagonistic to progress; it was old-fashioned, and primitively agricultural. It looked with suspicion on the factories built after Ingolby came and on the mining propositions, which circled the place with speculation. Unlike other towns of the West, it was insanitary and uneducated; it was also given to nepotism and a primitive kind of jobbery; but, on the whole, it was honest. It was a settlement twenty years before Lebanon had a house, though the latter exceeded the population of Manitou in five years, and became the home of all adventuring spirits—land agents, company promoters, mining prospectors, railway men, politicians, saloon-keepers, and up-to-date dissenting preachers. Manitou was, however, full of back-water people, religious fanatics, little farmers, guides, trappers, old *coureurs-de-bois*, Hudson's Bay Company factors and ex-factors, half-breeds; and all the rest.

The real feud between the two towns began about the time of the arrival of Gabriel Druse, his daughter, and Madame Bulteel, the woman in black, and it had grown with great rapidity and increasing intensity. Manitou condemned the sacrilegiousness of the Protestants, whose meeting-houses were used for "socials," "tea-meetings," "strawberry festivals," and entertainments of many kinds; while comic songs were sung at the table where the solemn Love Feast was held at the quarterly meetings. At last when attempts were made to elect to Parliament an Irish lawyer who added to his impecuniousness, eloquence, a half-finished University education, and an Orangeman's prejudices of the best brand of Belfast or Derry, inter-civic strife took the form of physical violence. The great bridge built by Ingolby between the two towns might have been ten thousand yards long, so deep was the estrangement between the two places. They had only one thing in common—a curious compromise—in the person of Nathan Rockwell, an agnostic doctor, who had arrived in Lebanon with a reputation for morality somewhat clouded; though, where his patients in Manitou and Lebanon were concerned, he had been the "pink of propriety."

Rockwell had arrived in Lebanon early in its career, and had remained unimportant until a railway accident occurred at Manitou and the resident doctors were driven from the field of battle, one by death, and one by illness. Then it was that the silent, smiling, dark-skinned, cool-headed and cool-handed Rockwell stepped in, and won for himself the

gratitude of all—from Monseigneur Lourde, the beloved Catholic priest, to Tekewani, the Indian chief. This accident was followed by an epidemic.

That was at the time, also, when Fleda Druse returned from Winnipeg, where she had been at school for one memorable and terrible six months, pining for her father, defying rules, and crying the night through for "the open world" as she called it. So it was that, to her father's dismay and joy in one, she had fled from school, leaving all her things behind her; and had reached home with only the clothes on her back and a few cents in her pocket.

Instantly on her return she had gone among the stricken people as fearlessly as Rockwell had done, but chiefly among the women and children; and it was said that the herbal medicine she administered was marvellous in its effect—so much so, that Rockwell asked for the prescription, which she declined to give.

Thus it was that the French Canadian mothers with daughters of their own, bright-eyed brunettes, ready for the man-market, regarded with toleration the girl who took their children away for picnics down the river or into the woods, and brought them back safe and sound at the end of the day. Not that they failed to be shocked sometimes, when, on her wild, Indian pony, Fleda swept through Manitou like a wind and out into the prairie, riding, as it were, to the end of the world. Try as they would, these grateful mothers of Manitou, they could not get as near to Fleda Druse as their children did, and they were vast distances from her father.

"There, there, look at him," said old Madame Thibadeau to her neighbour Christine Brisson—"look at him with his great grey beard, and his eyes like black fires, and that head of hair like a bundle of burnt flax! He comes from the place no man ever saw, that's sure."

"Ah, surelee, men don't grow so tall in any Christian country," announced Christine Brisson, her head nodding sagely. "I've seen the pictures in the books, and there's nobody so tall and that looks like him—not anywhere since Adam."

"*Nom de pipe*, sometimes—trulee, sometimes, I look up there at where he lives, and I think I see a thousand men on horses ride out of the woods behind his house and down here to gobble us all up. That's the way I feel. It's fancy, but I can't help that." Dame Thibadeau rested her hands on her huge stomach as though the idea had its origin there.

"I've seen a lot of fancies come to pass," gloomily returned her friend. "It's a funny world. I don't know what to make of it sometimes."

"And that girl of his, the strangest creature, as proud as a peacock, but then as kind as kind to the children—of a good heart, surelee. They say she has plenty of gold rings and pearls and bracelets, and all like that. Babette Courton, she saw them when she went to sew. Why doesn't Ma'm'selle wear them?"

Christine looked wise and smoothed out her apron as though it was a parchment. "With such queer ones, who knows? But, yes, as you say, she has a kind heart. The children, well, they follow her everywhere."

"Not the children only," sagely added the other. "From Lebanon they come, the men, and plenty here, too; and there's that Felix Marchand, the worst of all in Manitou or anywhere."

"I'd look sharp if Felix Marchand followed me," remarked Christine. "There are more papooses at the Reservation since he come back, and over in Lebanon——!" She whispered darkly to her friend, and they nodded knowingly.

"If he plays pranks in Manitou he'll get his throat cut, for sure. Even with Protes'ants and Injuns it's bad enough," remarked Dame Thibadeau, panting with the thought of it.

"He doesn't even leave the Doukhobors alone. There's——" Again Christine whispered, and again that ugly look came to their faces which belongs to the thought of forbidden things.

"Felix Marchand 'll have much money—bad penny as he is," continued Christine in her normal voice.

"He'll have more money than he can put in all the trouser legs he has. Old Hector, his father, has enough for a gover'ment. But that M'sieu' Felix will get his throat cut if he follows Ma'm'selle Druse about too much. She hates him—I've seen when they met. Old man Druse 'll make trouble. He don't look as he does for nothing."

"Ah, that's so. One day, we shall see what we shall see," murmured Christine, and waved a hand to a friend in the street.

This conversation happened on the evening of the day that Fleda Druse shot the Carillon Rapids

alone. An hour after the two gossips had had their say Gabriel Druse paced up and down the veranda of his house, stopping now and then to view the tumbling, hurrying Sagalac, or to dwell upon the sunset which crimsoned and bronzed the western sky. His walk had an air of impatience; he seemed disturbed of mind and restless of body.

He gave an impression of great force. He would have been picked out of a multitude, not alone because of his remarkable height, but because he had an air of command and the aloofness which shows a man sufficient unto himself.

As he stood gazing reflectively into the sunset, a strange, plaintive, birdlike note pierced the still evening air. His head lifted quickly, yet he did not look in the direction of the sound, which came from the woods behind the house. He did not stir, and his eyes half-closed, as though he hesitated what to do. The call was not that of a bird familiar to the Western world. It had a melancholy softness like that of the bell-bird of the Australian bush. Yet, in the insistence of the note, it was, too, a challenge or a summons.

Three times during the past week he had heard it—once as he went by the market-place of Manitou; once as he returned in the dusk from Tekewani's Reservation, and once at dawn from the woods behind the house. His present restlessness and suppressed agitation had been the result.

It was a call he knew well. It was like a voice from a dead world. It asked, he knew, for an answering call, yet he had not given it. It was seven

days since he first heard it in the market-place, and in that seven days he had realized that nothing in this world which has ever been, really ceases to be. Presently, the call was repeated. On the three former occasions there had been no repetition. The call had trembled in the air but once and had died away into unbroken silence. Now, however, it rang out with an added poignancy. It was like a bird calling to its vanished mate.

With sudden resolution Druse turned. Leaving the veranda, he walked slowly behind the house into the woods and stood still under the branches of a great cedar. Raising his head, a strange, solemn note came from his lips; but the voice died away in a sharp broken sound which was more human than birdlike, which had the shrill insistence of authority. The call to him had been almost ventriloquial in its nature. His lips had not moved at all.

There was silence for a moment after he had called into the void, as it were, and then there appeared suddenly from behind a clump of juniper, a young man of dark face and upright bearing. He made a slow obeisance with a gesture suggestive of the Oriental world, yet not like the usual gesture of the East Indian, the Turk or the Persian; it was composite of all.

He could not have been more than twenty-five years of age. He was so sparely made, and his face being clean-shaven, he looked even younger. His clothes were the clothes of the Western man; and yet there was a manner of wearing them, there were touches which were evidence to the watchful ob-

server that he was of other spheres. His wide, felt, Western hat had a droop on one side and a broken treatment of the crown, which of itself was enough to show him a stranger to the prairie, while his brown velveteen jacket, held by its two lowest buttons, was reminiscent of an un-English life. His eyes alone would have announced him as of some foreign race, though he was like none of the foreigners who had been the pioneers of Manitou. Unlike as he and Gabriel Druse were in height, build, and movement, still there was something akin in them both.

After a short silence evidently disconcerting to him, "Blessing and hail, my Ry," he said in a low tone. He spoke in a strange language and with a voice rougher than his looks would have suggested.

The old man made a haughty gesture of impatience. "What do you want with me, my Romany *chal*?" * he asked sharply.

The young man replied hastily. He seemed to speak by rote. His manner was too eager to suit the impressiveness of his words. "The sheep are without a shepherd," he said. "The young men marry among the Gorgios, or they are lost in the cities and return no more to the tents and the fields and the road. There is disorder in all the world among the Romanys. The ancient ways are forgotten. Our people gather and settle upon the land and live as the Gorgios live. They forget the way beneath the trees, they lose their skill in horses. If the fountain is choked, how shall the water run?"

* A glossary of Romany words will be found at the end of the book.

A cold sneer came to the face of Gabriel Druse. "The way beneath the trees!" he growled. "The way of the open road is enough. The way beneath the trees is the way of the thief, and the skill of the horse is the skill to cheat."

"There is no other way. It has been the way of the Romany since the time of Timur Beg and centuries beyond Timur, so it is told. One man and all men must do as the tribe has done since the beginning."

The old man pulled at his beard angrily. "You do not talk like a Romany, but like a Gorgio of the schools."

The young man's manner became more confident as he replied. "Thinking on what was to come to me, I read in the books as the Gorgio reads. I sat in my tent and worked with a pen; I saw in the printed sheets what the world was doing every day. This I did because of what was to come."

"And have you read of me in the printed sheets? Did they tell you where I was to be found?" Gabriel Druse's eyes were angry, his manner was authoritative.

The young man stretched out his hands eloquently. "Hail and blessing, my Ry, was there need of printed pages to tell me that? Is not everything known of the Ry to the Romany people without the written or printed thing? How does the wind go? How does the star sweep across the sky? Does not the whisper pass as the lightning flashes? Have you forgotten all, my Ry? Is there a Romany camp at Scutari? Shall it not know what is the news of the

Bailies of Scotland and the Caravans by the Tagus? It is known always where my lord is. All the Romanys everywhere know it, and many hundreds have come hither from overseas. They are east, they are south, they are west."

He made gesture towards these three points of the compass. A dark frown came upon the old man's forehead. "I ordered that none should seek to follow, that I be left in peace till my pilgrimage was done. Even as the first pilgrims of our people in the days of Timur Beg in India, so I have come forth from among you all till the time be fulfilled."

There was a crafty look in the old man's eyes as he spoke, and ages of dubious reasoning and purpose showed in their velvet depths.

"No one has sought me but you in all these years," he continued. "Who are you that you should come? I did not call, and there was my command that none should call to me."

A bolder look grew in the other's face. His carriage gained in ease. "There is trouble everywhere—in Italy, in Spain, in France, in England, in Russia, in mother India"—he made a gesture of salutation and bowed low—"and our rites and mysteries are like water spilt upon the ground. If the head be cut off, how shall the body move? That is how it is. You are vanished, my lord, and the body dies."

The old man plucked his beard again fiercely and his words came with guttural force. "That is fool's talk. In the past I was never everywhere at once. When I was in Russia, I was not in Greece; when I was in England, I was not in Portugal. I was al-

ways 'vanished' from one place to another, yet the body lived."

"But your word was passed along the roads everywhere, my Ry. Your tongue was not still from sunrise to the end of the day. Your call was heard always, now here, now there, and the Romanys were one; they held together."

The old man's face darkened still more and his eyes flashed fire. "These are lies you are telling, and they will choke you, my Romany *chal*. Am I deceived, I who have known more liars than any man under the sky? Am I to be fooled, who have seen so many fools in their folly? There is roguery in you, or I have never seen roguery."

"I am a true Romany, my Ry," the other answered, with an air of courage and a little defiance also.

"You are a rogue and a liar, that is sure. These wailings are your own. The Romany goes on his way as he has gone these hundreds of years. If I am silent, my people will wait until I speak again; if they see me not they will wait till I enter their camps once more. Why are you here? Speak, rogue and liar."

The wrathful old man, sure in his reading of the youth, towered above him commandingly. It almost seemed as though he would do him bodily harm, so threatening was his attitude, but the young Romany raised his head, and with a note of triumph said, "I have come for my own, as it is my right."

"What is your own?"

"What has been yours until now, my Ry."

A grey look stole slowly up the strong face of the exiled leader, for his mind suddenly read the truth behind the young man's confident words.

"What is mine is always mine," he answered roughly. "Speak! What is it I have that you come for?"

The young man braced himself and put a hand upon his lips. "I come for your daughter, my Ry."

The old man suddenly regained his composure, and authority spoke in his bearing and his words. "What have you to do with my daughter?"

"She was married to me when I was seven years of age, as my Ry knows. I am the son of Lemuel Fawe—Jethro Fawe is my name. For three thousand pounds it was so arranged. On his death-bed three thousand pounds did my father give to you for this betrothal. I was but a child, yet I remembered, and my kinsmen remembered, for it is their honour also. I am the son of Lemuel Fawe, the husband of Fleda, daughter of Gabriel Druse, King and Duke and Earl of all the Romanys; and I come for my own."

Something very like a sigh of relief came from Gabriel Druse's lips, but the anger in his face did not pass, and a rigid pride made the distance between them endless. He looked like a patriarch giving judgment as he raised his hand and pointed with a menacing finger at Jethro Fawe, his Romany subject—and, according to the laws of the Romany tribes, his son-in-law. It did not matter that the girl—but three years of age when it happened—had no memory of the day when the chiefs and great

people assembled outside the tent of Lemuel Fawe when he lay dying, and, by the simple act of stepping over a branch of hazel, the two children were married: if Romany law and custom were to abide, then the two now were man and wife. Did not Lemuel Fawe, the old-time rival of Gabriel Druse for the kingship of the Romanys, the claimant whose family had been rulers of the Romanys for generations before the Druses gained ascendancy—did not Fawe, dying, seek to secure for his son by marriage what he had failed to get for himself by other means?

All these things had at one time been part of Gabriel Druse's covenant of life, until one year in England, when Fleda, at twelve years of age, was taken ill and would have died, but that a great lady descended upon their camp, took the girl to her own house, and there nursed and tended her, giving her the best medical aid the world could produce, so that the girl lived, and with her passionate nature loved the Lady Barrowdale as she might have loved her own mother, had that mother lived and she had ever known her. And when the Lady Barrowdale sickened and died of the same sickness which had nearly been her own death, the promise she made then overrode all other covenants made for her. She had promised the great lady who had given her own widowed, childless life for her own, that she would not remain a Gipsy, that she would not marry a Gipsy; but that if ever she gave herself to any man it would be to a Gorgio, a European, who travelled oftenest "the open road" leading to his

own door. The years which had passed since those tragic days in Gloucestershire had seen the shadows of that dark episode pass, but the pledge had remained; and Gabriel Druse had kept his word to the dead, because of the vow made to the woman who had given her life for the life of a Romany lass.

The Romany tribes of all the nations did not know why their Ry had hidden himself in the New World; they did not know that the girl had for ever forsworn their race, and would never become head of all the Romanys, solving the problem of the rival dynasties by linking her life with that of Jethro Fawe. But Jethro Fawe had come to claim his own.

Now Gabriel Druse's eyes followed his own menacing finger with sharp insistence. In the past such a look had been in his eyes when he had sentenced men to death. They had not died by the gallows or the sword or the bullet, but they had died as commanded, and none had questioned his decree. None asked where or how the thing was done when a fire sprang up in a field, or a quarry, or on a lonely heath or hill-top, and on the pyre were all the belongings of the condemned, being resolved into dust as their owner had been made earth again.

"Son of Lemuel Fawe," the old man said, his voice rough with authority, "but that you are of the Blood, you should die now for this disobedience. When the time is fulfilled, I will return. Until then, my daughter and I are as those who have no people. Begone! Nothing that is here belongs to you. Begone, and come no more!"

"I have come for my own—for my Romany *chi*,

and I will not go without her. I am blood of the Blood, and she is mine."

"You have not seen her," said the old man craftily, and fighting hard against the wrath consuming him, though he liked the young man's spirit. "She has changed. She is no longer Romany."

"I have seen her, and her beauty is like the rose and the palm."

"When have you seen her since the day before the tent of Lemuel Fawe now seventeen years ago?" There was an uneasy note in the commanding tone.

"I have seen her three times of late, and the last time I saw her was an hour or so since, when she rode the Rapids of Carillon."

The old man started, his lips parted, but for a moment he did not speak. At last words came. "The Rapids—speak. What have you heard, Jethro, son of Lemuel?"

"I did not hear, I saw her shoot the Rapids. I ran to follow. At Carillon I saw her arrive. She was in the arms of a Gorgio of Lebanon—Ingolby is his name."

A malediction burst from Gabriel Druse's lips, words sharp and terrible in their intensity. For the first time since they had met the young man blanched. The savage was alive in the giant.

"Speak. Tell all," Druse said, with hands clenching.

Swiftly the young man told all he had seen, and described how he had run all the way—four miles—from Carillon, arriving before Fleda and her Indian escort.

He had hardly finished his tale, shrinking, as he told it, from the fierceness of his chief, when a voice called from the direction of the house.

"Father—father," it cried.

A change passed over the old man's face. It cleared as the face of the sun clears when a cloud drives past and is gone. The transformation was startling. Without further glance at his companion he moved swiftly towards the house. Once more Fleda's voice called, and before he could answer they were face to face.

She stood radiant and elate, and seemed not apprehensive of disfavour or reproach. Behind her was Tekewani and his braves.

"You have heard?" she asked, reading her father's face.

"I have heard. Have you no heart?" he answered. "If the Rapids had drowned you!"

She came close to him and ran her fingers through his beard tenderly. "I was not born to be drowned," she said softly.

Now that she was a long distance from Ingolby, the fact that a man had held her in his arms left no shadow on her face. Ingolby was now only a part of her triumph of the Rapids. She tossed a hand affectionately towards Tekewani and his braves.

"*How!*" said Gabriel Druse, and made a gesture of salutation to the Indian chief.

"*How!*" answered Tekewani, and raised his arm high in response. An instant afterwards Tekewani and his followers were gone their ways.

Suddenly Fleda's eyes rested on the young Ro-

many who was now standing at a little distance away. Apprehension came to her face. She felt her heart stand still and her hands grow cold, she knew not why. But she saw that the man was a Romany.

Her father turned sharply. A storm gathered in his face once more, and a murderous look came into his eyes.

"Who is he?" Fleda asked, scarce above a whisper, and she noted the insistent, amorous look of the stranger.

"He says he is your husband," answered her father harshly.

CHAPTER V

"BY THE RIVER STARZKE . . . IT WAS SO DONE"

THERE was absolute silence for a moment. The two men fixed their gaze upon the girl. The fear which had first come to her face passed suddenly, and a will, new-born and fearless, possessed it. Yesterday this will had been only a trembling, undisciplined force, but since then she had been passed through the tests which her own soul, or Destiny, had set for her, and she had emerged a woman, confident and understanding, if tremulous. In days gone by her adventurous, lonely spirit had driven her to the prairies, savagely riding her Indian pony through the streets of Manitou and out on the North Trail, or south through *coulées*, or westward into the great woods, looking for what she never found.

Her spirit was no longer the vague thing driving here and there with pleasant torture. It had found freedom and light; what the Romany folk call its own *tan*, its home, though it be but home of each day's trek. That wild spirit was now a force which understood itself in a new if uncompleted way. It was a sword free from its scabbard.

The adventure of the Carillon Rapids had been a kind of deliverance of an unborn thing which, desiring the overworld, had found it. A few hours ago the face of Ingolby, as she waked to consciousness in his arms, had taught her something suddenly; and the face of Felix Marchand had taught her even more. Something new and strange had happened to her, and her father's uncouth but piercing mind saw the change in her. Her quick, fluttering moods, her careless, undirected energy, her wistful waywardness, had of late troubled and vexed him, called on capacities in him which he did not possess; but now he was suddenly aware that she had emerged from passionate inconsistencies and in some good sense had found herself.

Like a wind she had swept out of childhood into a woman's world where the eyes saw things unseen before, a world how many thousand leagues in the future; and here in a flash, also, she was swept like a wind back again to a time before there was even conscious childhood—a dim, distant time when she lived and ate and slept for ever in the field or the vale, in the quarry, beside the hedge, or on the edge of harvest-fields; when she was carried in strong arms, or sat in the shelter of a man's breast as a horse cantered down a glade, under an ardent sky, amid blooms never seen since then. She was whisked back into that distant, unreal world by the figure of a young Romany standing beside a spruce-tree, and by her father's voice which uttered the startling words, "*He says he is your husband!*"

Indignation and a bitter pride looked out of her

eyes, as she heard the preposterous claim—as though she were some wild dweller of the jungle being called by her savage mate back to the lair she had forsaken.

"Since when were you my husband?" she asked Jethro Fawe composedly.

Her quiet scorn brought a quiver to his spirit; for he was of a people to whom anger and passion were part of every relationship of life, its stimulus and its recreation, its expression of the individual.

His eyelids trembled, but he drew himself together.

"Seventeen years ago by the River Starzke in the Roumelian country, it was so done," he replied stubbornly. "You were sealed to me, as my Ry here knows, and as you will remember, if you fix your mind upon it. It was beyond the city of Starzke three leagues, under the brown scarp of the Dragbad Hills. It was in the morning when the sun was by a quarter of its course. It happened before my father's tent, the tent of Lemuel Fawe. There you and I were sealed before our Romany folk. For three thousand pounds which my father gave to your father, you——"

With a swift gesture she stopped him. Walking close up to him, she looked him full in the eyes. There was a contemptuous pride in her face which forced him to lower his eyelids sulkily.

He would have understood a torrent of words—to him that would have regulated the true value of the situation; but this disdainful composure embarrassed him. He had come prepared for trouble and difficulty, but he had rather more determination

than most of his class and people, and his spirit of adventure was high. Now that he had seen the girl who was his own according to Romany law, he felt he had been a hundred times justified in demanding her from her father, according to the pledge and bond of so many years ago. He had nothing to lose but his life, and he had risked that before. This old man, the head of the Romany folk, had the bulk of the fortune which had been his own father's and he had the logic of lucre which is the most convincing of all logic. Yet with the girl holding his eyes commandingly, he was conscious that he was asking more than a Romany lass to share his *tan*, to go wandering from Romany people to Romany people, king and queen of them all when Gabriel Druse had passed away. Fleda Druse would be a queen of queens, but there was that queenliness in her now which was not Romany—something which was Gorgio, which was caste, which made a shivering distance between them.

As he had spoken, she saw it all as he described it.

Vaguely, cloudily, the scene passed before her. Now and again in the passing years had filmy impressions floated before her mind of a swift-flowing river and high crags, and wooded hills and tents and horsemen and shouting, and a lad that held her hand, and banners waved over their heads, and galloping and shouting, and then a sudden quiet, and many men and women gathered about a tent, and a wailing thereafter. After which, in her faint remembrance, there seemed to fall a mist, and a space of blankness, and then a starting up from a

bed, and looking out of the doors of a tent, where many people gathered about a great fire, whose flames licked the heavens, and seemed to devour a Romany tent standing alone with a Romany wagon full of its household things.

As Jethro Fawe had spoken, the misty, elusive visions had become living memories, and she knew that he had spoken the truth, and that these fleeting things were pictures of her sealing to Jethro Fawe and the death of Lemuel Fawe, and the burning of all that belonged to him in that last ritual of Romany farewell to the dead.

She knew now that she had been bargained for like any slave—for three thousand pounds. How far away it all seemed, how barbaric and revolting! Yet here it all was rolling up like a flood to her feet, to bear her away into a past with its sordidness and vagabondage, however gilded and graded above the lowest vagabondage.

Here at Manitou she had tasted a free life which was not vagabondage, the passion of the open road which was not an elaborate and furtive evasion of the law and a defiance of social ostracism. Here she and her father moved in an atmosphere of esteem touched by mystery, but not by suspicion; here civilization in its most elastic organization and flexible conventions, had laid its hold upon her, had done in this expansive, loosely knitted social system what could never have been accomplished in a great city—in London, Vienna, Rome, or New York. She had had here the old free life of the road, so full of the scent of deep woods—the song of rivers,

the carol of birds, the murmuring of trees, the mysterious and devout whisperings of the night, the happy communings of stray peoples meeting and passing, the gaiety and gossip of the market-place, the sound of church bells across a valley, the storms and wild lightnings and rushing torrents, the cries of frightened beasts, the wash and rush of rain, the sharp pain of frost, and the agonies of some lost traveller rescued from the wide inclemency, the soft starlight after, the balm of the purged air, and "rosy-fingered morn" blinking blithely at the world. The old life of the open road she had had here without anything of its shame, its stigma, and its separateness, its discordance with the stationary forces of law and organized community.

Wild moments there had been of late years when she longed for the faces of Romany folk gathered about the fire, while some Romany *pral* drew all hearts with the violin or the dulcimer. When Ambrose or Gilderoy or Christo responded to the pleadings of some sentimental lass, and sang to the harpist's strings—

> "Cold blows the wind over my true love,
> Cold blow the drops of rain;
> I never, never had but one sweetheart;
> In the green wood he was slain,"

and to cries of "Again! *Ay bor!* again!" the black-eyed lover, hypnotizing himself into an ecstasy, poured out race and passion and war with the law, in the true Gipsy rant which is sung from Transylvania to Yetholm or Carnarvon or Vancouver——

"Time was I went to my true love,
Time was she came to me——"

The sharp passion which moved her now as she stood before Jethro Fawe would not have been so acute yesterday; but to-day—she had lain in a Gorgio's arms to-day; and though he was nothing to her, he was still a Gorgio of Gorgios; and this man before her—*her husband*—was at best but a man of the hedges and the byre and the clay-pit, the quarry and the wood; a nomad with no home, nothing that belonged to what she was now a part of—organized, collective existence, the life of the house-dweller, not the life of the *tan*, the *koppa* and the *vellgouris*—the tent, the blanket, and the fair.

"I was never bought, and I was never sold," she said to Jethro Fawe at last—"not for three thousand pounds, not in three thousand years. Look at me well, and see whether you think it was so, or ever could be so. Look at me well, Jethro Fawe."

"You are mine—it was so done seventeen years ago," he answered, defiantly and tenaciously.

"I was three years old, seventeen years ago," she returned quietly, but her eyes forced his to look at her, when they turned away as though their light hurt him.

"It is no matter," he rejoined. "It is the way of our people. It has been so, and it will be so while there is a Romany tent standing or moving on."

In his rage Gabriel Druse could keep silence no longer.

"Rogue, what have you to say of such things?"

he growled. "I am the head of all. I pass the word, and things are so and so. By long and by last, if I pass the word that you shall sleep the sleep, it will be so, my Romany *chal.*"

His daughter stretched out her hand to stop further speech from her father—"Hush!" she said maliciously, "he has come a long way for naught. It will be longer going back. Let him have his say. It is his capital. He has only breath and beauty."

Jethro shrank from the sharp irony of her tongue as he would not have shrunk before her father's violence. Biting rejection was in her tones. He knew dimly that the thing he shrank from belonged to nothing Romany in her, but to that scornful pride of the Gorgios which had kept the Romany outside the social pale.

"Only breath and beauty!" she had said, and that she could laugh at his handsomeness was certain proof that it was not wilfulness which rejected his claims. Now there was rage in his heart greater than had been in that of Gabriel Druse.

"I have come a long way for a good thing," he said with head thrown back, "and if 'breath and beauty' is all I bring, yet that is because what my father had in his purse has made my Ry rich"—he flung a hand out towards Gabriel Druse—"and because I keep to the open road as my father did, true to my Romany blood. The wind and the sun and the fatness of the field have made me what I am, and never in my life had I an ache or a pain. You have the breath and the beauty, too, but you have the gold also; and what you are and what you

have is mine by the Romany law, and it will come to me, by long and by last."

Fleda turned quietly to her father. "If it is true concerning the three thousand pounds, give it to him and let him go. It will buy him what he would never get by what he is."

The old man flashed a look of anger upon her. "He came empty, he shall go empty. Against my commands, his insolence has brought him here. And let him keep his eyes skinned, or he shall have no breath with which to return. I am Gabriel Druse, lord over all the Romany people in all the world from Teheran to San Diego, and across the seas and back again; and my will shall be done."

He paused, reflecting for a moment, though his fingers opened and shut in anger. "This much I will do," he added. "When I return to my people I will deal with this matter in the place where Lemuel Fawe died. By the place called Starzke, I will come to reckoning, and then and then only."

"When?" asked the young man eagerly.

Gabriel Druse's eyes flashed. "When I return as I will to return." Then suddenly he added, "This much I will say, it shall be before——"

The girl stopped him. "It shall be when it shall be. Am I a chattel to be bartered by any will except my own? I will have naught to do with any Romany law. Not by Starzke shall the matter be dealt with, but here by the River Sagalac. This Romany has no claim upon me. My will is my own; I myself and no other shall choose my husband, and he will never be a Romany."

The young man's eyes suddenly took on a dreaming, subtle look, submerging the sulkiness which had filled him. Twice he essayed to speak, but faltered. At last, with an air, he said:

"For seventeen years I have kept the faith. I was sealed to you, and I hold by the sealing. Wherever you went, it was known to me. In my thoughts I followed. I read the Gorgio books; I made ready for this day. I saw you as you were that day by Starzke, like the young bird in the nest; and the thought of it was with me always. I knew that when I saw you again the brown eyes would be browner, the words at the lips would be sweeter—and so it is. All is as I dreamed for these long years. I was ever faithful. By night and day I saw you as you were when Romany law made you mine for ever. I looked forward to the day when I would take you to my *tan*, and there we two would——"

A flush sprang suddenly to Fleda Druse's face, then slowly faded, leaving it pale and indignant. Sharply she interrupted him.

"They should have called you Ananias," she said scornfully. "My father has called you a rogue, and now I know you are one. I have not heard, but I know—I know that you have had a hundred loves, and been true to none. The red scarfs you have given to the Romany and the Gorgio flyaways would make a tent for all the Fawes in all the world."

At first he flung up his head in astonishment at her words, then, as she proceeded, a flush swept across his face and his eyes filled up again with sullenness. She had read the real truth concerning

him. He had gone too far. He had been convincing while he had said what was true, but her instinct had suddenly told her what he was. Her perception had pierced to the core of his life—a vagabondage, a little more gilded than was common among his fellows, made possible by his position as the successor to her father, and by the money of Lemuel Fawe which he had dissipated.

He had come when all his gold was gone to do the one bold thing which might at once restore his fortunes. He had brains, and he knew now that his adventure was in grave peril.

He laughed in his anger. "Is only the Gorgio to embrace the Romany lass? One fondled mine today in his arms down there at Carillon. That's the way it goes! The old song tells the end of it——

'But the Gorgio lies 'neath the beech-wood tree;
He'll broach my *tan* no more;
And my love she sleeps afar from me,
But near to the churchyard door.

'Time was I went to my true love,
Time was she came to me——'"

He got no farther. Gabriel Druse was on him, gripping his arms so tight to his body that his swift motion to draw a weapon was frustrated. The old man put out all his strength, a strength which in his younger days was greater than any two men in any Romany camp, and the "breath and beauty" of Jethro Fawe grew less and less. His face became purple and distorted, his body convulsed, then limp,

and presently he lay on the ground with a knee on his chest and fierce, bony hands at his throat.

"Don't kill him—father, don't!" cried the girl, laying restraining hands on the old man's shoulders.

He withdrew his hands and released the body from his knee. Jethro Fawe lay still.

"Is he dead?" she whispered, awestricken.

"Dead?" The old man felt the breast of the unconscious man. He smiled grimly. "He is lucky not to be dead."

"What shall we do?" the girl asked again with a white face.

The old man stooped and lifted the unconscious form in his arms as though it was that of a child.

"Where are you going?" she asked anxiously, as he moved away.

"To the hut in the juniper wood," he answered.

She watched till he had disappeared with his limp burden into the depths of the trees. Then she turned and went slowly towards the house.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNGUARDED FIRES

THE public knew well that Ingolby had solved his biggest business problem, because three offices of three railways—one big and two small—suddenly became merged under his control. At which there was rejoicing at Lebanon, followed by dismay and indignation at Manitou, for one of the smaller merged railways had its offices there, and it was now removed to Lebanon; while several of the staff, having proved cantankerous, were promptly retired. As they were French Canadians, their retirement became a public matter in Manitou and begot fresh quarrel between the rival towns.

Ingolby had made a tactical mistake in at once removing the office of the merged railway from Manitou, and he saw it quickly. It was not possible to put the matter right at once, however.

There had already been collision between his own railway-men and the rivermen from Manitou, whom Felix Marchand had bribed to cause trouble: two Manitou men had been seriously hurt, and feeling ran high. Ingolby's eyes opened wide when he saw Marchand's ugly game. He loathed the dissolute

fellow, but he realized now that his foe was a factor to be reckoned with, for Marchand had plenty of money as well as a bad nature. He saw he was in for a big fight with Manitou, and he had to think it out.

So this time he went pigeon-shooting.

He got his pigeons, and the slaughter did him good. As though in keeping with the situation, he shot on both sides of the Sagalac with great good luck, and in the late afternoon sent his Indian lad on ahead to Lebanon with the day's spoil, while he loitered through the woods, a gun slung in the hollow of his arm. He had walked many miles, but there was still a spring to his step and he hummed an air with his shoulders thrown back and his hat on the back of his head. He had had his shooting, he had done his thinking, and he was pleased with himself. He had shaped his homeward course so that it would bring him near to Gabriel Druse's house.

He had seen Fleda only twice since the episode at Carillon, and met her only once, and that was but for a moment at a Fête for the hospital at Manitou, and with other people present—people who lay in wait for crumbs of gossip.

Since the running of the Rapids, Fleda had filled a larger place in the eyes of Manitou and Lebanon. She had appealed to the Western mind: she had done a brave physical thing. Wherever she went she was made conscious of a new attitude towards herself, a more understanding feeling. At the Fête when she and Ingolby met face to face, people had immediately drawn round them curious and excited. These

could not understand why the two talked so little, and had such an every-day manner with each other. Only old Mother Thibadeau, who had a heart that sees, caught a look in Fleda's eyes, a warm deepening of colour, a sudden embarrassment, which she knew how to interpret.

"See now, monseigneur," she said to Monseigneur Lourde, nodding towards Fleda and Ingolby, "there would be work here soon for you or Father Bidette if they were not two heretics."

"Is she a heretic, then, madame?" asked the old white-headed priest, his eyes quizzically following Fleda.

"She is not a Catholic, and she must be a heretic, that's certain," was the reply.

"I'm not so sure," mused the priest. Smiling, he raised his hat as he caught Fleda's eyes. He made as if to go towards her, but something in her look held him back. He realized that Fleda did not wish to speak with him, and that she was even hurrying away from her father, who lumbered through the crowd as though unconscious of them all.

Presently Monseigneur Lourde saw Fleda leave the Fête and take the road towards home. There was a sense of excitement in her motions, and he also had seen that tremulous, embarrassed look in her eyes. It puzzled him. He did not connect it wholly with Ingolby as Madame Thibadeau had done. He had lived so long among primitive people that he was more accustomed to study faces than find the truth from words, and he had always been conscious that this girl, educated and even intellectual, was at

heart as primitive as the wildest daughter of the tepees of the North. There was also in her something of that mystery which belongs to the universal itinerary—that cosmopolitan something which is the native human.

"She has far to go," the priest said to himself as he turned to greet Ingolby with a smile, bright and shy, but gravely reproachful, too.

This happened on the day before the collision between the railway-men and the river-drivers, and the old priest already knew what trouble was afoot.

There was little Felix Marchand did which was hidden from him. He made his way to Ingolby to warn him.

As Ingolby now walked in the woods towards Gabriel Druse's house, he recalled one striking phrase used by the aged priest in reference to the closing of the railway offices.

"*When you strike your camp, put out the fires,*" was the aphorism.

Ingolby stopped, humming to himself as the words came to his memory again. Bending his head in thought for a moment, he stood still, cogitating.

"The dear old fellow was right," he said presently aloud with uplifted head. "I struck camp, but I didn't put out the fires. There's a lot of that in life."

That is what had happened also to Gabriel Druse and his daughter. They had struck camp, but had not put out the camp-fires. That which had been done by the River Starzke came again in its appointed time. The untended, unguarded fire may

spread devastation and ruin, following with angry freedom the marching feet of those who builded it.

"Yes, you've got to put out your fires when you quit the bivouac," continued Ingolby aloud, as he gazed ahead of him through the opening greenery, beyond which lay Gabriel Druse's home. Where he was the woods were thick, and here and there on either side it was almost impenetrable. Few people ever came through this wood. It belonged in greater part to Gabriel Druse, and in lesser part to the Hudson's Bay Company and the Government; and as the land was not valuable till it was cleared, and there was plenty of prairie land to be had, from which neither stick nor stump must be removed, these woods were very lonely. Occasionally a trapper or a sportsman wandered through them, but just here where Ingolby was none ever loitered. It was too thick for game, there was no roadway leading anywhere, but only an overgrown path, used in the old days by Indians. It was this path which Ingolby trod with eager steps.

Presently, as he stood still at sight of a ground-hog making for its hiding-place, he saw a shadow fall across the light breaking through the trees some distance in front of him. It was Fleda. She had not seen him, and she came hurrying towards where he was with head bent, a brightly ribboned hat swinging in her fingers. She seemed part of the woods, its wild simplicity, its depth, its colour—already Autumn was crimsoning the leaves, touching them with amber tints, making the woodland warm and kind. She wore a dress of golden brown which

matched her hair, and at her throat was a black-velvet ribbon with a brooch of antique paste which flashed the light like diamonds, but more softly.

Suddenly, as she came on, she stopped and raised her head in a listening attitude, her eyes opening wide as if listening, too—it was as though she heard with them as well; alive to catch sounds which evaded capture. She was like some creature of an ancient wood with its own secret and immemorial history which the world could never know. There was that in her face which did not belong to civilization or to that fighting world of which Ingolby was so eager a factor. All the generations of the wood and road, the combe and the river, the quarry and the secluded boscage were in her look. There was that about her which was at once elusive and primevally real.

She was not of those who would be lost in the dust of futility. Whatever she was, she was an independent atom in the mass of the world's breeding. Perhaps it was consciousness of the dynamic quality in the girl, her nearness to naked nature, which made Madame Bulteel say that she would "have a history."

If she got twisted as she came wayfaring, if her mind became possessed of a false passion or purpose which she thought a true one, then tragedy would await her. Yet in this quiet wood so near to the centuries that were before Adam was, she looked like a spirit of comedy listening till the Spirit of the Wood should break the silence.

Ingolby felt his blood beat faster. He had a feeling

that he was looking at a wood-nymph who might flash out of his vision as a mere fantasy of the mind. There shot through him the strangest feeling that if she were his, he would be linked with something alien to the world of which he was.

Yet, recalling the day at Carillon when her cheek lay on his shoulder and her warm breast was pressed unresistingly against him, as he lifted her from his boat, he knew that he would have to make the hardest fight of his life if he meant not to have more of her than this brief acquaintance, so touched by sensation and romance. He was, maybe, somewhat sensational; his career had, even in its present restricted compass, been spectacular; but romance, with its reveries and its moonshinings, its impulses and its blind adventures, had not been any part of his existence.

Hers were not the first red lips which, voluntarily or involuntarily, had invited him; nor hers the first eyes which had sparkled to his glances; and this triumphant Titian head of hers was not the only one he had seen. When he had taken her hand at the Hospital Fête, her fingers, long and warm and fine, had folded round his own with a singular confidence, an involuntary enclosing friendliness; and now as he watched her listening—did she hear something?—he saw her hand stretch out as though commanding silence, the "hush!" of an alluring gesture.

This assuredly was not the girl who had run the Carillon Rapids, for that adventuress was full of a vital force like a man's, and this girl had the evanishing charm of a dryad.

Suddenly a change passed over her. She was as one who had listened and had caught the note of song for which she waited; but her face clouded, and the rapt look gave way to an immediate distress. The fantasy of the wood-nymph underwent translation in Ingolby's mind; she was now like a mortal, who, having been transformed, at immortal dictate was returning to mortal state again.

To heighten the illusion, he thought he heard faint singing in the depths of the wood. He put his hands to his ears for a moment, and took them away again to make sure that it was really singing and not his imagination; and when he saw Fleda's face again, there was fresh evidence that his senses had not deceived him. After all, it was not strange that some one should be singing in that deepest wood beyond.

Now Fleda moved forward towards where he stood, quickening her footsteps as though remembering something she must do. He stepped out into the path and came to meet her. She heard his footsteps, saw him, and stood still abruptly.

She did not make a sound, but a hand went to her bosom quickly, as though to quiet her heart or to steady herself. He had broken suddenly upon her intent thoughts, he had startled her as she had been seldom startled, for all her childhood training had been towards self-possession before surprise and danger.

"This is not your side of the Sagalac," she said with a half-smile, regaining composure.

"That is in dispute," he answered gaily. "I

want to belong to both sides of the Sagalac, I want both sides to belong to each other so that either side shall not be my side or your side, or——"

"Or Monsieur Felix Marchand's side," she interrupted meaningly.

"Oh, he's on the outside!" snapped the fighter, with a hardening mouth.

She did not reply at once, but put her hat on, and tied the ribbons loosely under her chin, looking thoughtfully into the distance.

"Is that the Western slang for saying he belongs nowhere?" she asked.

"Nowhere here," he answered with a grim twist to the corner of his mouth, his eyes half-closing with sulky meaning. "Won't you sit down?" he added quickly, in a more sprightly tone, for he saw she was about to move on. He motioned towards a log lying beside the path and kicked some branches out of the way.

After slight hesitation she sat down, burying her shoes in the fallen leaves.

"You don't like Felix Marchand?" she remarked presently.

"No. Do you?"

She met his eyes squarely—so squarely that his own rather lost their courage, and he blinked more quickly than is needed with a healthy eye. He had been audacious, but he had not surprised the garrison.

"I have no deep reason for liking or disliking him, and you have," she answered firmly; yet her colour rose slightly, and he thought he had never seen skin that looked so like velvet—creamy, pink velvet.

"You seemed to think differently at Carillon not long ago," he returned.

"That was an accident," she answered calmly. "He was drunk, and that is for forgetting—always."

"Always! Have you seen many men drunk?" he asked quickly. He did not mean to be quizzical, but his voice sounded so, and she detected it.

"Yes, many," she answered with a little ring of defiance in her tone—"many, often."

"Where?" he queried recklessly.

"In Lebanon," she retorted. "In Lebanon—your side."

How different she seemed from a few moments ago when she stood listening like a nymph for the song of the Spirit of the Wood! Now she was gay, buoyant, with a chamois-like alertness and a beaming vigour.

"Now I know what 'blind drunk' means," he replied musingly. "In Manitou when men get drunk, the people get astigmatism and can't see the tangle-footed stagger."

"It means that the pines of Manitou are straighter than the cedars of Lebanon," she remarked.

"And the pines of Manitou have needles," he rejoined, meaning to give her the victory.

"Is my tongue as sharp as that?" she asked, amusement in her eyes.

"So sharp I can feel the point when I can't see it," he retorted.

"I'm glad of that," she replied with an affectation of conceit. "Of course if you live in Lebanon you need surgery to make you feel a point."

"I give in—you have me," he remarked.

"You give in to Manitou?" she asked provokingly.

"Certainly not—only to you. I said, 'You have me.'"

"Ah, you give in to that which won't hurt you——"

"Wouldn't *you* hurt me?" he asked in a softening tone.

"You only play with words," she answered with sudden gravity. "Hurt you? I owe you what I cannot pay back. I owe you my life; but as nothing can be given in exchange for a life, I cannot pay you."

"But like may be given for like," he rejoined in a tone suddenly full of meaning.

"Again you are playing with words—and with me," she answered brusquely, and a little light of anger dawned in her eyes. Did he think that he could say a thing of that sort to her—when he pleased? Did he think that because he had done her a great service, he could say casually what belonged only to the sacred moments of existence? She looked at him with rising indignation, but there suddenly came to her the conviction that he had not spoken with affronting gallantry, but that for him the moment had a gravity not to be marred by the place, or the circumstance.

"I beg your pardon if I spoke hastily," he answered presently. "Yet there's many a true word spoken in jest."

There was a moment's silence. She realized that he was drawn to her, and that the attraction was not alone due to his having saved her at Carillon; that he was not taking advantage of the thing which

must ever be a bond between them, whatever came of life. When she had seen him at the Hospital Fête, a feeling had rushed over her that he had got nearer to her than any man had ever done. Then—even then, she felt the thing which all lovers, actual, or in the making, feel—that they must *do something* for the being who to them is more than all else and all others. She was not in love with Ingolby. How could she be in love with this man she had seen but a few times—this Gorgio! Why was it that even as they talked together now, she felt the real, true distance between them—of race, of origin, of history, of life, of circumstance? The hut in the wood where Gabriel Druse had carried Jethro Fawe was not three hundred yards away.

She sighed, stirred, and a wild look came in her eyes—a look of rebellion or of protest. Presently she recovered herself. She was a creature of sudden moods.

"What is it you want to do with Manitou and Lebanon?" she asked after a pause in which the thoughts of both had travelled far.

"You really wish to know—you *don't* know?" he asked with sudden intensity.

She regarded him frankly, smiled, then she laughed outright, showing her teeth very white and regular and handsome. The boyish eagerness of his look, the whimsical twist of his mouth, which always showed when he was keenly roused—as though everything that really meant anything was part of a comet-like comedy—had caused her merriment. All the hidden things in his face seemed to open out

into a swift shrewdness and dry candour when he was in his mood of "laying all the cards upon the table."

"I don't *know*," she answered quietly. "I have heard things, but I should like to learn the truth from you. What are your plans?"

Her eyes were burning with inquiry. She was suddenly brought to the gateways of a new world. Plans—what had she or her people to do with plans! What Romany ever constructed anything? What did the building of a city or a country mean to a Romany *chal* or a Romany *chi*, they who lived from field to field, from common to moor, from barn to city wall? A Romany tent or a Romany camp, with its families, was the whole territory of their enterprise, designs and patriotism. They saw the thousand places where cities could be made, and built their fires on the sites of them, and camped a day, and were gone, leaving them waiting and barren as before. They travelled through the new lands in America from the fringe of the Arctic to Patagonia, but they raised no rooftree; they tilled no acre, opened no market, set up no tabernacle: they had neither home nor country.

Fleda was the heir of all this, the product of generations of such vagabondage. Had the last few years given her the civic sense, the home sense? From the influence of the Englishwoman, who had made her forsake the Romany life, had there come habits of mind in tune with the women of the Sagalac, who were helping to build so much more than their homes? Since the incident of the Carillon Rapids

she had changed, but what the change meant was yet in her unopened Book of Revelations. Yet something stirred in her which she had never felt before. She had come of a race of wayfarers, but the spirit of the builders touched her now.

"What are my plans?" Ingolby drew a long breath of satisfaction. "Well, just here where we are will be seen a great thing. There's the Yukon and all its gold; there's the Peace River country and all its unploughed wheat-fields; there's the whole valley of the Sagalac, which alone can maintain twenty millions of people; there's the East and the British people overseas who must have bread; there's China and Japan going to give up rice, and eat the wheaten loaf; there's the U. S. A. with its hundred millions of people—it 'll be that in a few years—and its exhausted wheat-fields; and here, right here, is the bread-basket for all the hungry peoples; and Manitou and Lebanon are the centre of it. They will be the distribution centre. I want to see the base laid right. I'm not going to stay here till it all happens, but I want to plan it all so that it will happen, then I'll go on and do a bigger thing somewhere else. These two towns have got to come together; they must play one big game. I want to lay the wires for it. That's why I've got capitalists to start paper-works, engineering works, a foundry, and a sash-door-and-blind-factory—just the beginning. That's why I've put two factories on one side of the river and two on the other."

"Was it really you who started those factories?" she asked incredulously.

"Of course! It was part of my plans. I wasn't foolish enough to build and run them myself. I looked for the right people that had the money and the brains, and I let them sweat—let them sweat it out. I'm not a manufacturer; I'm an inventor and a builder. I built the bridge over the river; and——"

She nodded. "Yes, the bridge is good; but they say you are a schemer," she added suggestively.

"Certainly. But if I have schemes which 'll do good, I ought to be supported. I don't mind what they call me, so long as they don't call me too late for dinner."

They both laughed. It was seldom he talked like this, and never had he talked to such a listener before.

"The merging of the three railways was a good scheme, and I was the schemer," he continued. "It might mean monopoly, but it won't work out that way. It will simply concentrate energy and save elbow-grease. It will set free capital and capacity for other things."

"They say there will be fewer men at work, not only in the offices but on the whole railway system, and they don't like that in Manitou—ah, no, they don't!" she urged.

"They're right in a sense," he answered. "But the men will be employed at other things, which won't represent waste and capital overlapping. Overlapping capital hits everybody in the end. But who says all that? Who raises the cry of 'wolf' in Manitou?"

"A good many people say it now," she answered, "but I think Felix Marchand said it first. He is against you, and he is dangerous."

He shrugged a shoulder. "Oh, if any fool said it, it would be the same!" he answered. "That's a fire easily lighted; though it sometimes burns long and hard." He frowned, and a fighting look came into his face.

"Then you know all that is working against you in Manitou—working harder than ever before?"

"I think I do, but I probably don't know all. Have you any special news about it?"

"Felix Marchand is spending money among the men. They are going on strike on your railways and in the mills."

"What mills—in Manitou?" he asked abruptly.

"In both towns."

He laughed harshly. "That's a tall order," he said sharply. "Both towns—I don't think so, not yet."

"A sympathetic strike is what he calls it," she rejoined.

"Yes, a row over some imagined grievance on the railway, and all the men in all the factories to strike—that's the new game of the modern labour agitator! Marchand has been travelling in France," he added disdainfully, "but he has brought his goods to the wrong shop. What do the priests—what does Monseigneur Lourde say to it all?"

"I am not a Catholic," she replied gravely. "I've heard, though, that Monseigneur is trying to stop the trouble. But——" She paused.

"Yes—*but?*" he asked. "What were you going to say?"

"But there are many roughs in Manitou, and Felix Marchand makes friends with them. I don't think the priests will be able to help much in the end, and if it is to be Manitou against Lebanon, you can't expect a great deal."

"I never expect more than I get—generally less," he answered grimly; and he moved the gun about on his knees restlessly, fingering the lock and the trigger softly.

"I am sure Felix Marchand means you harm," she persisted.

"Personal harm?"

"Yes."

He laughed sarcastically again. "We are not in Bulgaria or Sicily," he rejoined, his jaw hardening; "and I can take care of myself. What makes you say he means personal harm? Have you heard anything?"

"No, nothing, but I feel it is so. That day at the Hospital Fête he looked at you in a way that told me. I think such instincts are given to some people and some races. You read books—I read people. I wanted to warn you, and I do so. This has been lucky in a way, this meeting. Please don't treat what I've said lightly. Your plans are in danger and you also."

Was the psychic and fortune-telling instinct of the Romany alive in her and working involuntarily, doing that faithfully which her people did so faithlessly? The darkness which comes from intense feeling had gathered underneath her eyes, and gave

them a look of pensiveness not in keeping with the glow of her perfect health, the velvet of her cheek.

"Would you mind telling me where you got your information?" he asked presently.

"My father heard here and there, and I, also, and some I got from old Madame Thibadeau who is a friend of mine. I talk with her more than with any one else in Manitou. First she taught me how to crochet, but she teaches me many other things, too."

"I know the old girl by sight. She is a character. She would know a lot, that woman."

He paused, seemed about to speak, hesitated, then after a moment hastily said: "A minute ago you spoke of having the instinct of your race, or something like that. What is your race? Is it Irish, or—do you mind my asking? Your English is perfect, but there is something—something——"

She turned away her head, a flush spreading over her face. She was unprepared for the question. No one had ever asked it directly of her since they had come to Manitou. Whatever speculation there had been, she had never been obliged to tell any one of what race she was. She spoke English with no perceptible accent, as she spoke Spanish, Italian, French, Hungarian and Greek; and there was nothing in her speech marking her as different from the ordinary Western woman. Certainly she would have been considered pure English among the polyglot population of Manitou.

What must she say? What was it her duty to say? She was living the life of a British woman, she

was as much a Gorgio in her daily existence as this man beside her. Manitou was as much home—nay, it was a thousand times more home—than the shifting *habitat* of the days when they wandered from the Caspians to John o' Groat's.

For years all traces of the past had been removed as completely as though the tide had washed over them; for years it had been so, until the fateful day when she ran the Carillon Rapids. That day saw her whole horizon alter; that day saw this man beside her enter on the stage of her life. And on that very day also came Jethro Fawe out of the Past and demanded her return.

That had been a day of Destiny. The old, panting, unrealized, tempestuous longing was gone. She was as one who saw danger and faced it, who had a fight to make and would make it.

What would happen if she told this man that she was a Gipsy—the daughter of a Gipsy ruler, which was no more than being head of a clan of the world's transients, the leader of the world's nomads? Money—her father had that, at least—much money; got in ways that could not bear the light at times, yet, as the world counts things, not dishonestly; for more than one great minister in a notable country in Europe had commissioned him, more than one ruler and crowned head had used him when "there was trouble in the Balkans," or the "sick man of Europe" was worse, or the Russian Bear came prowling. His service had ever been secret service, when he lived the life of the caravan and the open highway. He had no stable place among the men of all nations,

and yet secret rites and mysteries and a language which was known from Bokhara to Wandsworth, and from Waikiki to Valparaiso, gave him dignity of a kind, clothed him with importance.

Yet she wanted to tell this man beside her the whole truth, and see what he would do. Would he turn his face away in disgust? What had she a right to tell? She knew well that her father would wish her to keep to that secrecy which so far had sheltered them—at least until Jethro Fawe's coming.

At last she turned and looked him in the eyes, the flush gone from her face.

"I'm not Irish—do I look Irish?" she asked quietly, though her heart was beating unevenly.

"You look more Irish than anything else, except, maybe, Slav or Hungarian—or Gipsy," he said admiringly and unwittingly.

"I have Gipsy blood in me," she answered slowly, "but no Irish or Hungarian blood."

"Gipsy—is that so?" he said spontaneously, as she watched him so intently that the pulses throbbed at her temples.

A short time ago Fleda might have announced her origin defiantly, now her courage failed her. She did not wish him to be prejudiced against her.

"Well, well," he added, "I only just guessed at it, because there's something unusual and strong in you, not because your eyes are so dark and your hair so brown."

"Not because of my 'wild beauty'—I thought you were going to say that," she added, ironically and a little defiantly. "I got some verses by post the other

day from one of your friends in Lebanon—a stock-rider I think he was, and they said I had a 'wild beauty' and a 'savage sweetness.'"

He laughed, yet he suddenly saw her sensitive vigilance, and by instinct he felt that she was watching for some sign of shock or disdain on his part; yet in truth he cared no more whether she had Gipsy blood in her than he would have done if she had said she was a daughter of the Czar.

"Men do write that kind of thing," he added cheerfully, "but it's quite harmless. There was a disease at college we called adjectivitis. Your poet friend had it. He could have left out the 'wild' and 'savage' and he'd have been pleasant, and truthful too—no, I apologize."

He had seen her face darken under the compliment, and he hastened to put it right.

"I loved a Gipsy once," he added whimsically to divert attention from his mistake, and with so genuine a sympathy in his voice that she was disarmed. "I was ten and she was fifty at least. Oh, a wonderful woman! I had a boy friend, a fat, happy little joker he was; his name was Charley Long. Well, this woman was his aunt. When she moved through the town, people looked twice. She was tall and splendidly made, and her manner—oh, as if she owned the place. She did own a lot—she had more money than any one else thereabouts, anyhow. It was the tallest kind of a holiday when Charley and I walked out to the big white house—golly, but it was white—to visit her! We didn't eat much the day before we went to see her; and we

didn't eat much the day after, either. She used to feed us—I wish I could eat like that now! I can see her brown eyes following us about, full of fire, but soft and kind, too. She had a great temper, they said, but everybody liked her, and some loved her. She'd had one girl, but she died of consumption, got camping out in bad weather. Aunt Cynthy—that was what we called her, her name being Cynthia—never got over her girl's death. She blamed herself for it. She had had those fits of going back to the open—for weeks at a time. The girl oughtn't to have been taken to camp out. She was never strong, and it was the wrong place and the wrong time of year—all right in August and all wrong in October.

"Well, always after her girl's death Aunt Cynthy was as I knew her, being good to us youngsters as no one else ever was, or could be. Her tea-table was a sight; and the rest of the meals were banquets. The first time I ever ate hedgehog was at her place. A little while ago, just before you came, I thought of her. A hedgehog crossed the path here, and it brought those days back to me—Charley Long and Aunt Cynthy and all. Yes, the first time I ever ate hedgehog was in Aunt Cynthy's house. *Hi-yi*, as old Tekewani says, but it was good!"

"What is the Romany word for hedgehog?" Fleda asked in a low tone.

"*Hotchewitchi*," he replied instantly. "That's right, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is right," she answered, and her eyes had a far-away look, but there was a kind of trouble at her mouth.

"Do you speak Romany?" she added a little breathlessly.

"No, no. I only picked up words I heard Aunt Cynthy use now and then when she was in the mood."

"What was the history of Aunt Cynthy?"

"I only know what Charley Long told me. Aunt Cynthy was the daughter of a Gipsy—they say the only Gipsy in that part of the country at the time—who used to buy and sell horses, and travel in a big van as comfortable as a house. The old man suddenly died on the farm of Charley's uncle. In a month the uncle married the girl. She brought him thirty thousand dollars."

Fleda knew that this man who had fired her spirit for the first time had told his childhood story to show her the view he took of her origin; but she did not like him less for that, though she seemed to feel a chasm between them still. The new things moving in her were like breezes that stir the trees, not like the wind turning the windmill which grinds the corn. She had scarcely yet begun to grind the corn of life.

She did not know where she was going, what she would find, or where the new trail would lead her. The Past dogged her footsteps, hung round her like the folds of a garment. Even as she rejected it, it asserted its power, troubled her, angered her, humiliated her, called to her.

She was glad of this meeting with Ingolby. It had helped her. She had set out to do a thing she dreaded, and it was easier now than it would have been if they had not met. She had been on her way

to the Hut in the Wood, and now the dread of the visit to Jethro Fawe had diminished. The last voice she would hear before she entered Jethro Fawe's prison was that of the man who represented to her, however vaguely, the life which must be her future—the settled life, the life of Society and not of the Saracen.

After he had told his boyhood story they sat in silence for a moment or two, then she rose, and, turning to him, was about to speak. At that instant there came distinctly through the wood a faint, trilling sound. Her face paled a little, and the words died upon her lips. Ingolby, having turned his head as though to listen, did not see the change in her face, and she quickly regained her self-control.

"I heard that sound before," he said, "and I thought from your look you heard it, too. It's funny. It *is* singing, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's singing," she answered.

"Who is it—some of the heathen from the Reservation?"

"Yes, some of the heathen," she answered.

"Has Tekewani got a lodge about here?"

"He had one here in the old days."

"And his people go to it still—was that where you were going when I broke in on you?"

"Yes, I was going there. I am a heathen, also, you know."

"Well, I'll be a heathen, too, if you'll show me how; if you think I'd pass for one. I've done a lot of heathen things in my time."

She gave him her hand to say good-bye.

"Mayn't I go with you?" he asked.

"'I must finish my journey alone,'" she answered slowly, repeating a line from the first English book she had ever read.

"That's English enough," he responded with a laugh. "Well, if I mustn't go with you, I mustn't, but my respects to Robinson Crusoe." He slung the gun into the hollow of his arm. "I'd like much to go with you," he urged.

"Not to-day," she answered firmly.

Again the voice came through the woods, a little louder now.

"It sounds like a call," he remarked.

"It is a call," she answered—"the call of the heathen."

An instant after she had gone on, with a look half-smiling, half-forbidding, thrown over her shoulder at him.

"I've a notion to follow her," he said eagerly, and he took a step in her direction.

Suddenly she turned and came back to him. "Your plans are in danger—don't forget Felix Marchand," she said, and then turned from him again.

"Oh, I'll not forget," he answered, and waved his cap after her. "No, I'll not forget monsieur," he added sharply, and he stepped out with a light of battle in his eyes.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH THE PRISONER GOES FREE

AS Fleda wound her way through the deeper wood, remembering the things which had just been said between herself and Ingolby, the colour came and went in her face. To no man had she ever talked so long and intimately, not even in the far-off days when she lived the Romany life.

Then, as daughter of the head of all the Romanys, she had her place apart; and the Romany lads had been few who had talked with her even as a child. Her father had jealously guarded her until the time when she fell under the spell and influence of Lady Barrowdale. Here, by the Sagalac, she had moved among this polyglot people with an assurance of her own separateness which was the position of every girl in the West, but developed in her own case to the *nth* degree.

Never before had she come so near—not to a man, but to what concerned a man; and never had a man come so near to her or what concerned her inmost life. It was not a question of opportunity or temptation—these always attend the footsteps of those who would adventure; but for long she had

fenced herself round with restrictions of her own making; and the secrecy and strangeness of her father's course had made this not only possible, but in a sense imperative.

The end to that had come. Gaiety, daring, passion, elation, depression, were alive in her now, and in a sense had found an outlet in a handful of days—indeed since the day when Jethro Fawe and Max Ingolby had come into her life, each in his own way, for good or for evil. If Ingolby came for good, then Jethro Fawe came for evil. She would have revolted at the suggestion that Jethro Fawe came for good.

Yet, during the last few days, she had been drawn again and again towards the hut in the wood. It was as though a power stronger than herself had ordered her not to wander far from where the Romany claimant of herself awaited his fate. As though Jethro knew she was drawn towards him, he had sung the Gipsy songs which she and Ingolby had heard in the distance. He might have shouted for relief in the hope of attracting the attention of some passer-by, and so found release and brought confusion and perhaps punishment to Gabriel Druse; but that was not possible to him. First and last he was a Romany, good or bad; and it was his duty to obey his Ry of Rys, the only rule which the Romany acknowledged. "*Though he slay me, yet will I trust him,*" he would have said, if he had ever heard the phrase; but in his stubborn way he made the meaning of the phrase the pivot of his own action. If he could but see Fleda face to face, he made no doubt

that something would accrue to his advantage. He would not give up the hunt without a struggle.

Twice a day Gabriel Druse had placed food and water inside the door of the hut and locked him fast again, but had not spoken to him save once, and then but to say that his fate had not yet been determined. Jethro's reply had been that he was in no haste, that he could wait for what he came to get; that it was his own—*ay bor!* it was his own, and God or devil could not prevent the thing meant to be from the beginning of the world.

He did not hear Fleda approach the hut; he was singing to himself a song he had learned in Montenegro. There the Romany was held in high regard, because of the help his own father had given to the Montenegrin people, fighting for their independence, by admirable weapons of Gipsy workmanship, setting all the Gipsies in that part of the Balkans at work to supply them.

This was the song he sang:

"He gave his soul for a thousand days,
The sun was his in the sky,
His feet were on the neck of the world——
He loved his Romany *chi*.

"He sold his soul for a thousand days,
By her side to walk, in her arms to lie;
His soul might burn, but her lips were his,
And the heart of his Romany *chi*."

He repeated the last two lines into a rising note of exultation:

"His soul might burn, but her lips were his,
And the heart of his Romany *chi*."

The key suddenly turned in the lock, the door opened on the last words of the refrain, and, without hesitation, Fleda stepped inside, closing the door behind her.

"*Mi Duvel*, but who would think—ah, did you hear me call then?" he asked, rising from the plank couch where he had been sitting. He showed his teeth in a smile which was meant to be a welcome, but it had an involuntary malice.

"I heard you singing," she answered composedly, "but I do not come here because I'm called."

"But I do," he rejoined. "You called me from over the seas, and I came. I was in the Balkans; there was trouble—Servia, Montenegro, and Austria were rattling the fire-irons again, and there was I as my father was before me. But I heard you calling, and I came."

"You never heard me call, Jethro Fawe," she returned quietly. "My calling of you is as silent as the singing of the stars, where you are concerned. And the stars do not sing."

"But the stars do sing, and you call just the same," he responded with a twist to his moustache, and posing against the wall. "I've heard the stars sing. What's the noise they make in the heart, if it's not singing? You don't hear with the ears only. The heart hears. It's only a manner of speaking, this talk about the senses. One sense can do the same as all can do and a Romany ought to know how to use one or all. When your heart called I heard it, and across the seas I came. And by long and by last, but I was right in coming."

His impudence at once irritated her and provoked her admiration. She knew by instinct how false he was, and how a lie was as common with him as the truth; but his submission to her father, his indifference to his imprisonment, forced her interest, even as she was humiliated by the fact that he was *sib* to her, bound by ties of clan and blood apart from his monstrous claim of marriage. He was indeed such a man as a brainless or sensual woman could yield to with ease. He had an insinuating animal grace, that physical handsomeness which marks so many of the Tziganies who fill the red coats of a Gipsy musical sextette! He was not distinguished, yet there was an intelligence in his face, a daring at his lips and chin, which, in the discipline and conventions of organized society, would have made him superior. Now, with all his sleek handsomeness, he looked a cross between a splendid peasant and a chevalier of industry.

She compared him instinctively with Ingolby the Gorgio as she looked at him. What was it made the difference between the two? It was the *world* in a man—personality, knowledge of life, the culture of the thousand things which make up civilization: it was personality got from life and power in contest with the ordered world.

Yet was this so after all? Tekewani was only an Indian brave who lived on the bounty of a government, and yet he had presence and an air of command. Tekewani had been a nomad; he had not been bound to one place, settled in one city, held subservient to one flag. But, no, she was wrong:

Tekewani had been the servant and child of a system which was as fixed and historical as that of Russia or Spain. He belonged to a people who had traditions and laws of their own; organized communities moving here and there, but carrying with them their system, their laws and their national feeling.

There was the difference. This Romany was the child of irresponsibility, the being that fed upon life, that did not feed life; that left one place in the world to escape into another; that squeezed one day dry, threw it away, and then went seeking another day to bleed; for ever fleeing from yesterday, and using to-day only as a camping-ground. Suddenly, however, she came to a stop in her reflections. Her father, Gabriel Druse, was of the same race as this man, the same unorganized, irresponsible, useless race, with no weight of civic or social duty upon its shoulders—where did he stand? Was he no better than such as Jethro Fawe? Was he inferior to such as Ingolby, or even Tekewani?

She realized that in her father's face there was the look of one who had no place in the ambitious designs of men, who was not a builder, but a wayfarer. She had seen the look often of late, and had never read it until now, when Jethro Fawe stared at her with the boldness of possession, with the insolence of a soul of lust which had had its victories.

She read his look, and while one part of her shrank from him as from some noisome thing, another part of her—to her dismay and anger—understood him, and did not resent him. It was the Past dragging at her life. It was inherited predisposition, the un-

regulated passions of her forebears, the mating of the fields, the generated dominance of the body, which was not to be commanded into obscurity, but must taunt and tempt her while her soul sickened. She put a hand on herself. She must make this man realize once and for all that they were as far apart as Adam and Cagliostro.

"I never called to you," she said at last. "I did not know of your existence, and, if I had, then I certainly shouldn't have called."

"The Gorgios have taken away your mind, or you'd understand," he replied coolly. "Your soul calls and those that understand come. It isn't that you know who hears or who is coming—till he comes."

"A call to all creation!" she answered disdainfully. "Do you think you can impress me by saying things like that?"

"Why not? It's true. Wherever you went in all these years the memory of you kept calling me, my little *rinkne rakli*—my pretty little girl, made mine by the River Starzke over in the Roumelian country."

"You heard what my father said——"

"I heard what the Duke Gabriel said—*Mi Duvel*, I heard enough what he said, and I felt enough what he did!"

He laughed, and began to roll a cigarette mechanically, keeping his eyes fixed on her, however.

"You heard what my father said and what I said, and you will learn that it is true, if you live long enough," she added meaningly.

A look of startled perception flashed into his eyes. "If I live long enough, I'll turn you, my mad wife, into my Romany queen and the blessing of my *tan*."

"Don't mistake what I mean," she urged. "I shall never be ruler of the Romanys. I shall never hear——"

"You'll hear the *bosh* played—fiddle, they call it in these heathen places—at your second wedding with Jethro Fawe," he rejoined insolently, lighting his cigarette. "Home you'll come with me soon—*ay bor!*"

"Listen to me," she answered with anger tingling in every nerve and fibre. "I come of your race, I was what you are, a child of the hedge and the wood and the road; but that is all done. *Home*, you say! Home—in a tent by the roadside or——"

"As your mother lived—where you were born—well, well, but here's a Romany lass that's forgot her cradle!"

"I have forgotten nothing. I have only moved on. I have only seen that there is a better road to walk than that where people, always looking behind lest they be followed, and always looking in front to find refuge, drop the *patrin* in the dust or the grass or the bushes for others to follow after—always going on and on because they dare not go back."

Suddenly he threw his cigarette on the ground, and put his heel upon it in fury real or assumed. "Great Heaven and Hell," he exclaimed, "here's a Romany has sold her blood to the devil! And this is the daughter of Gabriel Druse, King and Duke

of all the Romanys, him with ancestor King Panuel, Duke of Little Egypt, who had Sigismund, and Charles the Great, and all the kings for friends. By long and by last, but this is a tale to tell to the Romanys of the world!"

For reply she went to the door and opened it wide.

"Then go and tell it, Jethro Fawe, to all the world. Tell them I am the renegade daughter of Gabriel Druse, ruler of them all. Tell them there is no fault in him, and that he will return to his own people in his own time, but that I, Fleda Druse, will never return—never! Now, get you gone from here."

The sunlight broke through the trees, and fell in a narrow path of light upon the doorway. A little grey bird fluttered into the radiance and came tripping across the threshold; a whippoorwill called in the ash-trees; and the sweet smell of the thick woodland, of the bracken and fern, crept into the room. The balm of a perfect evening of summer was upon the face of nature. The world seemed untroubled and serene; but in this hidden hut two stormy spirits broke the peace to which the place and the time were all entitled.

After Fleda's scornful words of release and dismissal, Jethro stood for a moment confounded and dismayed. He had not reckoned with this. During their talk it had come to him how simple it would be to overpower any check to his exit, how devilishly easy to put the girl at a disadvantage; but he drove the thought from him. In the first place, he was by no means sure that escape was what he wanted—not yet, at any rate; in the second place, if Gabriel

"TELL THEM THERE IS NO FAULT IN HIM, AND THAT HE WILL RETURN TO HIS OWN PEOPLE IN HIS OWN TIME, BUT THAT I, FLEDA DRUSE, WILL NEVER RETURN—NEVER! NOW, GET YOU GONE FROM HERE"

Druse passed the word along the subterranean wires of the Romany world, that Jethro Fawe should vanish, he would not long cumber the ground.

Yet it was not cowardice or fear of consequences which had held him back; it was a staggering admiration for this girl who had been given to him in marriage so many years ago. He had fared far and wide in his adventures and *amours* when he had gold in plenty; and he had swung more than one Gorgio woman in the wild dance of sentiment, dazzling them by the splendour of his passion. The fire gleaming in his dark eyes lighted a face which would have made memorable a picture by Guido. He had fared far and wide, but he had never seen a woman who had seized his imagination as this girl was doing; who roused in him, not the old hot desire, but the hungry will to have a *tan* of his own, and go travelling down the world with one who alone could satisfy him for all his days.

As he sat in this improvised woodland prison he had had visions of a hundred glades and valleys through which he had passed in days gone by—in England, in Spain, in Italy, in Roumania, in Austria, in Australia, in India—where his camp-fires had burned. In his visions he had seen her—Fleda Fawe, not Fleda Druse—laying the cloth, and bringing out the silver cups, or stretching the Turkey rugs upon the ground to make a couch for two bright-eyed lovers to whom the night was as the day, radiant and full of joy. He had shut his eyes and beheld hillsides where abandoned castles stood, and the fox and the squirrel and the hawk gave shade

and welcome to the dusty pilgrims of the road; or, when the wild winds blew in winter, gave shelter and wood for the fire, and a sense of homeliness among the companionable trees.

He had seen himself and this beautiful Romany *chi* at some village fair, while the lesser Romany folk told fortunes, or bought and sold horses, and the lesser still tinkered or worked in gold or brass; he had seen them both in a great wagon with bright furnishings and brass-girt harness on their horses, lording it over all, rich, dominant and admired. In his visions he had even seen a Romany babe carried in his arms to a Christian church and there baptized in grandeur as became the child of the head of the people. His imagination had also seen his own tombstone in some Christian churchyard near to the church porch, where he would not be lonely when he was dead, but could hear the gossip of the people as they went in and out of church; and on the tombstone some such inscription as he had seen once at Pforzheim—"*To the high-born Lord Johann, Earl of Little Egypt, to whose soul God be gracious and merciful.*"

To be sure, it was a strange thing for a Romany to be buried in a Gorgio churchyard; but it was what had chanced to many great men of the Romanys, such as the high-born Lord Panuel at Steinbrock, and Peter of Kleinschild at Mantua—all of whom had great emblazoned monuments in Christian churches, just to show that in all-levelling death they condescended from high estate to mingle their ashes with the dust of the Gorgio.

He had sought out his chieftain here in the new world in a spirit of adventure, cupidity and desire. He had come like one who betrays, but he acknowledged to a higher force than his own and to superior rights when Gabriel Druse's strong arm brought him low; and, waking to life and consciousness again, he was aware that another force also had levelled him to the earth. That force was this woman's spirit which now gave him his freedom so scornfully; who bade him begone and tell their people everywhere that she was no longer a Romany, while she would go no doubt—a thousand times without doubt unless *he* prevented it—to the swaggering Gorgio who had saved her on the Sagalac.

She stood waiting for him to go, as though he could not refuse his freedom. As a bone is tossed to a dog, she gave it to him.

"You have no right to set me free," he said coolly now. "I am not your prisoner. You tell me to take that word to the Romany people—that you leave them for ever. I will not do it. You are a Romany, and a Romany you must stay. You belong nowhere else. If you married a Gorgio, you would still sigh for the camp beneath the stars, for the tambourine and the dance——"

"And the fortune-telling," she interjected sharply, "and the snail-soup, and the dirty blanket under the hedge, and the constable on the road behind, always just behind, watching, waiting and——"

"The hedge is as clean as the dirty houses where the low-class Gorgios sleep. In faith, you are a long way from the River Starzke!" he added. "But

you are my mad wife, and I must wait till you've got sense again."

He sat down on the plank couch, and began to roll a cigarette once more.

"You come fitted out like a Gorgio lass now, and you look like a Gorgio countess, and you have the manners of an Archduchess; but that's nothing; it will peel off like a blister when it's pricked. Underneath is the Romany. It's there, and it will show red and angry when we've stripped off the Gorgio. It's the way with a woman, always acting, always imagining herself something else than what she is—if she's a beggar fancying herself a princess; if she's a princess fancying herself a flower-girl. *Mi Duvel*, but I know you all!"

Every word he said went home. She knew that there was truth in what he said, and that beneath all was the Romany blood; but she meant to conquer it. She had made her vow to one in England that she loved, and she would not change. Whatever happened, she had finished with Romany life, and to go back would only mean black tragedy in the end. A month ago it was a vow and an inner desire which made her determined; to-day it was the vow and a man—a Gorgio whom she had but now left in the woods, gazing after her with the look which a woman so well interprets.

"You mean you won't go free from here? Because I was a Romany, and wish you no harm, I have come here to-day to let you go where you will—to go back to the place where the *patrins* show where your people travel. I set you free, and you say what

you think will hurt and shame me. You have a cruel soul. You would torture any woman till she died. You shall not torture me. You are as far from me as the River Starzke. I could have let you stay here for my father to deal with, but I have set you free. I open the door for you, though you are nothing to me, and I am no more to you than one of the women you have fooled and left to eat the vile bread of the forsaken. You have been, you are a wolf—a wolf."

He got to his feet again, and the blood rushed to his face, so that it seemed almost black. A torrent of mad words gathered in his throat, but they choked him, and in the pause his will asserted itself. He became cool and deliberate.

"You are right, my girl, I have sucked the orange and thrown the skin away, and I've picked flowers and cast them by, but that was before the first day I saw you as you now are. You were standing by the Sagalac looking out to the west where the pack-trains were travelling into the sun over the mountains, and you had your hand on the neck of your pony. I was not ten feet away from you, behind a juniper-bush. I looked at you, and I wished that I had never seen a woman before and could look at the world as you did then—it was like water from a spring, that look. You are right in what you say. By long and by last I had a hard hand, and when I left what I'd struck down I never looked back. But I saw you, and I wished I had never seen a woman before. You have been here alone with me with that door shut. Have I said or done anything

that a Gorgio duke wouldn't do? Ah, God's love, but you were bold to come! I married you by the River Starzke; I looked upon you as my wife; and here you were alone with me! I had my rights, and I had been trampled underfoot by your father——"

"By your Chief."

"*Ay bor*, by my Chief! I had my wrongs, and I had my rights, and you were mine by Romany law. It was for me here to claim you—here where a Romany and his wife were alone together!"

His eyes were fixed searchingly on hers, as though he would read the effect of his words before he replied, and his voice had a curious, rough note, as though with difficulty he quelled the tempest within him. "I have my rights, and you had spat upon me," he said with ferocious softness.

She did not blench, but looked him steadily in the eyes.

"I knew what would be in your mind," she answered, "but that did not keep me from coming. You would not bite the hand that set you free."

"You called me a wolf a minute ago."

"But a wolf would not bite the hand that freed it from the trap. Yet if such shame could be, I still would have had no fear, for I should have shot you as wolves are shot that come too near the fold."

He looked at her piercingly, and the pupils of his eyes narrowed to a pin-point. "You would have shot me—you are armed?" he questioned.

"Am I the only woman that has armed herself against you and such as you? Do you not see?"

"*Mi Duvel*, but I do see now with a thousand eyes!" he said hoarsely.

His senses were reeling. Down beneath everything had been the thought that, as he had prevailed with other women, he could prevail with her; that she would come to him in the end. He had felt, but he had declined to see, the significance of her bearing, of her dress, of her speech, of her present mode of life, of its comparative luxury, its social distinction of a kind which lifted her above even the Gorgios by whom she was surrounded. A fatuous belief in himself and in his personal powers had deluded him. He had told the truth when he said that no woman had ever appealed to him as she did; that she had blotted out all other women from the book of his adventurous and dissolute life; and he had dreamed a dream of conquest of her when Fortune should hand out to him the key of the situation. Did not the beautiful Russian countess on the Volga flee from her liege lord and share his *tan?* When he played his fiddle to the Austrian princess, did she not give him a key to the garden where she walked of an evening? And this was a Romany lass, daughter of his Chieftain, as he was son of a great Romany chief; and what marvel could there be that she who had been made his child wife, should be conquered as others had been!

"*Mi Duvel*, but I see!" he repeated in a husky fierceness. "I am your husband, but you would have killed me if I had taken a kiss from your lips, sealed to me by all our tribes and by your father and mine."

"My lips are my own, my life is my own, and when

I marry, I shall marry a man of my own choosing, and he will not be a Romany," she replied with a look of resolution which her beating heart belied. "I'm not a pedlar's basket."

"*Kek! Kek!* That's plain," he retorted. "But the 'wolf' is no lamb either! I said I would not go till your father set me free, since you had no right to do so, but a wife should save her husband, and her husband should set himself free for his wife's sake"—his voice rose in fierce irony—"and so I will now go free. But I will not take the word to the Romany people that you are no more of them. I am a true Romany. I disobeyed my Ry in coming here because my wife was here, and I wanted her. I am a true Romany husband who will not betray his wife to her people; but I will have my way, and no Gorgio shall take her to his home. She belongs to my tent, and I will take her there."

Her gesture of contempt, anger and negation infuriated him. "If I do not take you to my *tan*, it will be because I'm dead," he said, and his white teeth showed fiercely.

"I have set you free. You had better go," she rejoined quietly.

Suddenly he turned at the doorway. A look of passion burned in his eyes. His voice became soft and persuasive. "I would put the past behind me, and be true to you, my girl," he said. "I shall be chief over all the Romany people when Duke Gabriel dies. We are *sib;* give me what is mine. I am yours —and I hold to my troth. Come, beloved, let us go together."

A sigh broke from her lips, for she saw that, bad as he was, there was a moment's truth in his words. "Go while you can," she said. "You are nothing to me."

For an instant he hesitated, then, with a muttered oath, sprang out into the bracken, and was presently lost among the trees.

For a long time she sat in the doorway, and again and again her eyes filled with tears. She felt a cloud of trouble closing in upon her. At last there was the sound of footsteps, and a moment later Gabriel Druse came through the trees towards her. His eyes were sullen and brooding.

"You have set him free?" he asked.

She nodded. "It was madness keeping him here," she said.

"It is madness letting him go," he answered morosely. "He will do harm. *Ay bor*, he will! I might have known—women are chicken-hearted. I ought to have put him out of the way, but I have no heart any more—no heart, I have the soul of a rabbit."

BOOK II

CHAPTER VIII

THE SULTAN

INGOLBY'S square head jerked forwards in stern inquiry and his eyes fastened those of Jowett, the horse-dealer. "Take care what you're saying, Jowett," he said. "It's a penitentiary job, if it can be proved. Are you sure you got it right?"

Jowett had unusual shrewdness, some vanity and a humorous tongue. He was a favourite in both towns, and had had the better of both in horse-dealing a score of times.

That did not make him less popular. However, it was said he liked low company, and it was true that though he had "money in the bank," and owned a corner lot or so, he seemed to care little what his company was. His most constant companion was Fabian Osterhaut, who was the common property of both towns, doing a little of everything for a living, from bill-posting to the solicitation of an insurance agent.

For any casual work connected with public functions Osterhaut was indispensable, and he would serve as a doctor's assistant and help cut off a leg, be the majordomo for a Sunday-school picnic, or

arrange a *soirée* at a meeting-house with equal impartiality. He had been known to attend a temperance meeting and a wake in the same evening. Yet no one ever questioned his *bona fides*, and if he had attended mass at Manitou in the morning, joined a heathen dance in Tekewani's Reserve in the afternoon, and listened to the oleaginous Rev. Reuben Tripple in the evening, it would have been taken as a matter of course.

He was at times profane and impecunious, and he had been shifted from one boarding-house to another till at last, having exhausted credit in Lebanon, he had found a room in the house of old Madame Thibadeau in Manitou. She had taken him in because, in years gone by, he had nursed her only son through an attack of smallpox on the Siwash River, and somehow Osterhaut had always paid his bills to her. He was curiously exact where she was concerned. If he had not enough for his week's board and lodging, he borrowed it, chiefly of Jowett, who used him profitably at times to pass the word about a horse, or bring news of a possible deal.

"It's a penitentiary job, Jowett," Ingolby repeated. "I didn't think Marchand would be so mad as that."

"Say, it's all straight enough, Chief," answered Jowett, sucking his unlighted cigar. "Osterhaut got wind of it—he's staying at old Mother Thibadeau's, as you know. He moves round a lot, and he put me on to it. I took on the job at once. I got in with the French toughs over at Manitou, at Barbazon's Tavern, and I gave them gin—we made it a gin night.

It struck their fancy—gin, all gin! 'Course there's nothing in gin different from any other spirit; but it fixed their minds, and took away suspicion.

"I got drunk—oh, yes, of course, blind drunk, didn't I? Kissed me, half a dozen of the Quebec boys did—said I was 'bully boy' and 'hell-fellow'; said I was '*bon enfant*'; and I said likewise in my best *patois*. They liked that. I've got a pretty good stock of monkey-French, and I let it go. They laughed till they cried at some of my mistakes, but they weren't no mistakes, not on your life. It was all done a-purpose. They said I was the only man from Lebanon they wouldn't have cut up and boiled, and they was going to have the blood of the Lebanon lot before they'd done. I pretended to get mad, and I talked wild. I said that Lebanon would get them first, that Lebanon wouldn't wait, but 'd have it out; and I took off my coat and staggered about—blind—fair blind boozy. I tripped over some fool's foot purposely, just beside a bench against the wall, and I come down on that bench hard. They laughed—Lord, how they laughed! They didn't mind my givin' 'em fits—all except one or two. That was what I expected. The one or two was mad. They begun raging towards me, but there I was asleep on the bench—stony blind, and then they only spit fire a bit. Some one threw my coat over me. I hadn't any cash in the pockets, not much—I knew better than that—and I snored like a sow. Then it happened what I thought would happen. They talked. And here it is. They're going to have a strike in the mills, and you're to get a

toss into the river. That's to be on Friday. But the other thing—well, they all cleared away but two. They were the two that wanted to have it out with me. They stayed behind. There was I snoring like a locomotive, but my ears open all right.

"Well, they give the thing away. One of 'em had just come from Felix Marchand and he was full of it. What was it? Why, the second night of the strike your new bridge over the river was to be blown up. Marchand was to give these two toughs three hundred dollars each for doing it."

"Blown up with what?" Ingolby asked sharply.

"Dynamite."

"Where would they get it?"

"Some left from blasting below the mills."

"All right! Go on."

"There wasn't much more. Old Barbazon, the landlord, come in and they quit talking about it; but they said enough to send 'em to gaol for ten years."

Ingolby blinked at Jowett reflectively, and his mouth gave a twist that lent to his face an almost droll look.

"What good would it do if they got ten years—or one year, if the bridge was blown up? If they got skinned alive, and if Marchand was handed over to a barnful of hungry rats to be gnawed to death, it wouldn't help. I've heard and seen a lot of hellish things, but there's nothing to equal that. To blow up the bridge—for what? To spite Lebanon, and to hurt me; to knock the spokes out of my wheel. He's the dregs, is Marchand."

"I guess he's a shyster by nature, that fellow," interposed Jowett. "He was boilin' hot when he was fifteen. He spoiled a girl I knew when he was twenty-two, not fourteen she was—Lil Sarnia; and he got her away before—well, he got her away East; and she's in a dive in Winnipeg now. As nice a girl—as nice a little girl she was, and could ride any broncho that ever bucked. What she saw in him—but there, she was only a child, just the mind of a child she had, and didn't understand. He'd ha' been tarred and feathered if it 'd been known. But old Mick Sarnia said hush, for his wife's sake, and so we hushed, and Sarnia's wife doesn't know even now. I thought a lot of Lil, as much almost as if she'd been my own; and lots o' times, when I think of it, I sit up straight, and the thing freezes me; and I want to get Marchand by the scruff of the neck. I got a horse, the worst that ever was—so bad I haven't had the heart to ride him or sell him. He's so bad he makes me laugh. There's nothing he won't do, from biting to bolting. Well, I'd like to tie Mr. Felix Marchand, Esquire, to his back, and let him loose on the prairie, and pray the Lord to save him if he thought fit. I fancy I know what the Lord would do. And Lil Sarnia's only one. Since he come back from the States, he's the limit, oh, the damnedest limit. He's a pest all round—and now, this!"

Ingolby kept blinking reflectively as Jowett talked. He was doing two things at once with a facility quite his own. He was understanding all Jowett was saying, but he was also weighing the whole situation.

His mind was gone fishing, figuratively speaking. He was essentially a man of action, but his action was the bullet of his mind; he had to be quiet physically when he was really thinking. Then he was as one in a dream where all physical motion was mechanical, and his body was acting automatically. His concentration, and therefore his abstraction, was phenomenal.

Jowett's reminiscences at a time so critical did not disturb him—did not, indeed, seem to be irrelevant. It was as though Felix Marchand was being passed in review before him in a series of aspects. He nodded encouragement to Jowett to go on.

"It's because Marchand hates you, Chief. The bump he got when you dropped him on the ground that day at Carillon hurts still. It's a chronic inflammation. Closing them railway offices at Manitou, and dislodging the officials, give him his first good chance. The feud between the towns is worse now than it's ever been. Make no mistake. There's a whole lot of toughs in Manitou. Then there's religion, and there's race, and there's a want-to-stand-still and leave-me-alone feeling. They don't want to get on. They don't want progress. They want to throw the slops out of the top windows into the street; they want their cesspools at the front door; they think that everybody's got to have smallpox some time or another, and the sooner they have it the better; they want to be bribed; and they think that if a vote's worth having it's worth paying for—and yet there's a bridge between these two towns!

A bridge—why, they're as far apart as the Yukon and Patagonia."

"What 'd buy Felix Marchand?" Ingolby asked meditatively. "What's his price?"

Jowett shifted with impatience. "Say, Chief, I don't know what you're thinking about. Do you think you could make a deal with Felix Marchand? Not much. You've got the cinch on him. You could send him to quod, and I'd send him there as quick as lightning. I'd hang him, if I could, for what he done to Lil Sarnia. Years ago when he was a boy he offered me a gold watch for a mare I had. The watch looked as right as could be—solid fourteen-carat, he said it was. He got my horse, and I got his watch. It wasn't any more gold than he was. It was filled—just plated with nine-carat gold. It was worth about ten dollars."

"What was the mare worth?" asked Ingolby, his mouth twisting again with quizzical meaning.

"That mare—she was all right."

"Yes, but what was the matter with her?"

"Oh, a spavin—she was all right when she got wound up—go like Dexter or Maud S."

"But if you were buying her what would you have paid for her, Jowett? Come now, man to man, as they say. How much did you pay for her?"

"About what she was worth, Chief, within a dollar or two."

"And what *was* she worth?"

"What I paid for her—ten dollars."

Then the two men looked at each other full in the eyes, and Jowett threw back his head and laughed

outright—laughed loud and hard. "Well, you got me, Chief, right under the guard," he observed.

Ingolby did not laugh outright, but there was a bubble of humour in his eyes. "What happened to the watch?" he asked.

"I got rid of it."

"In a horse-trade?"

"No, I got a town lot with it."

"In Lebanon?"

"Well, sort of in Lebanon's back-yard."

"What's the lot worth now?"

"About two thousand dollars!"

"Was it your first town lot?"

"The first lot of Mother Earth I ever owned."

"Then you got a vote on it?"

"Yes, my first vote."

"And the vote let you be a town-councillor?"

"It and my good looks."

"Indirectly, therefore, you are a landowner, a citizen, a public servant, and an instrument of progress because of Felix Marchand. If you hadn't had the watch you wouldn't have had that town lot."

"Well, mebbe, not that lot."

Suddenly Ingolby got to his feet and squared himself, and his face became alight with purpose. His mind had come back from fishing, and he was ready now for action. His plans were formed. He was in for a fight, and he had made up his mind, how, with the new information to his hand, he would develop his campaign further.

"You didn't make a fuss about the watch, Jowett. You might have gone to Felix Marchand or to his

father and proved him a liar, and got even that way. You didn't; you got a corner lot with it. That's what I'm going to do. I can have Felix Marchand put in the jug, and make his old father Hector Marchand sick; but I like old Hector Marchand, and I think he's bred as bad a pup as ever was. I'm going to try and do with this business as you did with that watch. I'm going to try and turn it to account and profit in the end. Felix Marchand's profiting by a mistake of mine—a mistake in policy. It gives him his spring-board; and there's enough dry grass in both towns to get a big blaze with a very little match. I know that things are seething. The Chief Constable keeps me posted as to what's going on here, and pretty fairly as to what's going on in Manitou. The police in Manitou are straight enough. That's one comfort. I've done Felix Marchand there. I guess that the Chief Constable of Manitou and Monseigneur Lourde and old Mother Thibadeau are about the only people that Marchand can't bribe. I see I've got to face a scrimmage before I can get what I want."

"What you want you'll have, I bet," was the admiring response.

"I'm going to have a good try. I want these two towns to be one. That 'll be good for your town lots, Jowett," he added whimsically. "If my policy is carried out, my town lot 'll be worth a pocketful of gold-plated watches or a stud of spavined mares."

He chuckled to himself, and his fingers reached towards a bell on the table, but he paused. "When was it they said the strike would begin?" he asked.

"Friday."

"Did they say what hour?"

"Eleven in the morning."

"Third of a day's work and a whole day's pay," he mused. "Jowett," he added, "I want you to have faith. I'm going to do Marchand, and I'm going to do him in a way that 'll be best in the end. You can help as much if not more than anybody—you and Osterhaut. And if I succeed, it 'll be worth your while."

"I ain't followin' you because it's worth while, but because I want to, Chief."

"I know; but a man—every man—likes the counters for the game." He turned to the table, opened a drawer, and took out a folded paper. He looked it through carefully, wrote a name on it, and handed it to Jowett.

"There's a hundred shares in the Northwest Railway, with my regards, Jowett. Some of the counters of the game."

Jowett handed it back at once with a shake of the head. "I don't live in Manitou," he said. "I'm almost *white*, Chief. I've never made a deal with you, and don't want to. I'm your man for the fun of it, and because I'd give my life to have your head on my shoulders for one year."

"I'd feel better if you'd take the shares, Jowett. You've helped me, and I can't let you do it for nothing."

"Then I can't do it at all. I'm discharged." Suddenly, however, a humorous, eager look shot into Jowett's face. "Will you toss for it?" he blurted out.

"Certainly, if you like," was the reply.

"Heads I win, tails it's yours?"

"Good."

Ingolby took a silver dollar from his pocket, and tossed. It came down tails. Ingolby had won.

"My corner lot against double the shares?" Jowett asked sharply, his face flushed with eager pleasure. He was a born gambler.

"As you like," answered Ingolby with a smile.

Ingolby tossed, and they stooped over to look at the dollar on the floor. It had come up heads.

"You win," said Ingolby, and turning to the table, took out another hundred shares. In a moment they were handed over.

"You're a wonder, Jowett," he said. "You risked a lot of money. Are you satisfied?"

"You bet, Chief. I come by these shares honestly now."

He picked up the silver dollar from the floor, and was about to put it in his pocket.

"Wait—that's my dollar," said Ingolby.

"By gracious, so it is!" said Jowett, and handed it over reluctantly.

Ingolby pocketed it with satisfaction.

Neither dwelt on the humour of the situation. They were only concerned for the rules of the game, and both were gamesters in their way.

After a few brief instructions to Jowett, and a message for Osterhaut concerning a suit of workman's clothes, Ingolby left his offices and walked down the main street of the town with his normal rapidity, responding cheerfully to the passers-by,

but not encouraging evident desire for talk with him. Men half-started forward to him, but he held them back with a restraining eye. They knew his ways. He was responsive in a brusque, inquisitive, but good-humoured and sometimes very droll way; but there were times when men said to themselves that he was to be left alone; and he was so much master of the place that, as Osterhaut and Jowett frequently remarked, "What he says goes!" It went even with those whom he had passed in the race of power.

He had had his struggles to be understood in his first days in Lebanon. He had fought intrigue and even treachery, had defeated groups which were the forces at work before he came to Lebanon, and had compelled the submission of others. All these had vowed to "get back at him," but when it became a question of Lebanon against Manitou they swung over to his side and acknowledged him as leader. The physical collision between the rougher elements of the two towns had brought matters to a head, and nearly every man in Lebanon felt that his honour was at stake, and was ready "to have it out with Manitou."

As he walked along the main street after his interview with Jowett, his eyes wandered over the buildings rising everywhere; and his mind reviewed as in a picture the same thinly inhabited street five years ago when he first came. Now farmers' wagons clacked and rumbled through the prairie dust, small herds of cattle jerked and shuffled their way to the slaughter-yard, or out to the open prairie, and caravans of settlers with their effects moved

sturdily forward to the trails which led to a new life beckoning from three points of the compass. That point which did not beckon was behind them. Flaxen-haired Swedes and Norwegians; square-jawed, round-headed North Germans; square-shouldered, loose-jointed Russians with heavy contemplative eyes and long hair, looked curiously at each other and nodded understandingly. Jostling them all, with a jeer and an oblique joke here and there, and crude chaff on each other and everybody, the settler from the United States asserted himself. He invariably obtruded himself, with quizzical inquiry, half contempt and half respect, on the young Englishman, who gazed round with phlegm upon his fellow adventurers, and made up to the sandy-faced Scot or the cheerful Irishman with his hat on the back of his head, who showed in the throng here and there. This was one of the days when the emigrant and settlers' trains arrived both from the East and from "the States," and Front Street in Lebanon had, from early morning, been alive with the children of hope and adventure.

With hands plunged deep in the capacious pockets of his grey jacket, Ingolby walked on, seeing everything; yet with his mind occupied intently, too, on the trouble which must be faced before Lebanon and Manitou would be the reciprocating engines of his policy. Coming to a spot where a great gap of vacant land showed in the street—land which he had bought for the new offices of his railway combine—he stood and looked at it abstractedly. Beyond it, a few blocks away, was the Sagalac, and beyond the

Sagalac was Manitou, and a little way to the right was the bridge which was the symbol of his policy. His eyes gazed almost unconsciously on the people and the horses and wagons coming and going upon the bridge. Then they were lifted to the tall chimneys rising at two or three points on the outskirts of Manitou.

"They don't know a good thing when they get it," he said to himself. "A strike—why, wages are double what they are in Quebec where most of 'em come from! Marchand——"

A hand touched his arm. "Have you got a minute to spare, kind sir?" a voice asked.

Ingolby turned and saw Nathan Rockwell, the doctor. "Ah, Rockwell," he responded cheerfully, "two minutes and a half, if you like! What is it?"

The Boss Doctor, as he was familiarly called by everyone, to identify him from the newer importations of medical men, drew from his pocket a newspaper.

"There's an infernal lie here about me," he replied. "They say that I——"

He proceeded to explain the misstatement, as Ingolby studied the paper carefully, for Rockwell was a man worth any amount of friendship.

"It's a lie, of course," Ingolby said firmly as he finished the paragraph. "Well?"

"Well, I've got to deal with it."

"You mean you're going to deny it in the papers?"

"Exactly."

"I wouldn't, Rockwell."

"You wouldn't?"

"No. You never can really overtake a newspaper lie. Lots of the people who read the lie don't see the denial. Your truth doesn't overtake the lie—it's a scarlet runner."

"I don't see that. When you're lied about, when a lie like that——"

"You can't overtake it, Boss. It's no use. It's sensational, it runs too fast. Truth's slow-footed. When a newspaper tells a lie about you, don't try to overtake it, *tell another.*"

He blinked with quizzical good-humour. Rockwell could not resist the audacity. "I don't believe you'd do it just the same," he retorted decisively, and laughing.

"I don't try the overtaking anyhow; I get something spectacular in my own favour to counteract the newspaper lie."

"In what way?"

"For instance, if they said I couldn't ride a moke at a village steeplechase, I'd at once publish the fact that, with a jack-knife, I'd killed two pumas that were after me. Both things would be lies, but the one would neutralize the other. If I said I could ride a moke, nobody would see it, and if it were seen it wouldn't make any impression; but to say I killed two mountain-lions with a jack-knife on the edge of a precipice, with the sun standing still to look at it, is as good as the original lie and better; and I score. My reputation increases."

Nathan Rockwell's equilibrium was restored. "You're certainly a wonder," he declared. "That's why you've succeeded."

"Have I succeeded?"

"Thirty-three—and what you are!"

"What am I?"

"Pretty well master here."

"Rockwell, that 'd do me a lot of harm if it was published. Don't say it again. This is a democratic country. They'd kick at my being called master of anything, and I'd have to tell a lie to counteract it."

"But it's the truth, and it hasn't to be overtaken."

A grim look came into Ingolby's face. "I'd like to be master-boss of life and death, holder of the sword and balances, the Sultan, here just for one week. I'd change some things. I'd gag some people that are doing terrible harm. It's a real bad business. The scratch-your-face period is over, and we're in the cut-your-throat epoch."

Rockwell nodded assent, opened the paper again, and pointed to a column. "I expect you haven't seen that. To my mind, in the present state of things, it's dynamite."

Ingolby read the column hastily. It was the report of a sermon delivered the evening before by the Rev. Reuben Tripple, the evangelical minister of Lebanon. It was a pæan of the Scriptures accompanied by a crazy charge that the Roman Church forbade the reading of the Bible. It had a tirade also about the Scarlet Woman and Popish idolatry.

Ingolby made a savage gesture. "The insatiable Christian beast!" he growled in anger. "There's no telling what this may do. You know what those fellows are over in Manitou. The place is full of them

going to the woods, besides the toughs at the mills and in the taverns. They're not psalm-singing, and they don't keep the Ten Commandments, but they're savagely fanatical, and——"

"And there's the funeral of an Orangeman to-morrow. The Orange Lodge attends in regalia."

Ingolby started and looked at the paper again. "The sneaking, praying liar," he said, his jaw setting grimly. "This thing's a call to riot. There's an element in Lebanon as well that 'd rather fight than eat. It's the kind of lie that——"

"That you can't overtake," said the Boss Doctor appositely: "and I don't know that even you can tell another that 'll neutralize it. Your prescription won't work here."

An acknowledging smile played at Ingolby's mouth.

"We've got to have a try. We've got to draw off the bull with a red rag somehow."

"I don't see how myself. That Orange funeral will bring a row on to us. I can just see the toughs at Manitou when they read this stuff, and know about that funeral."

"It's announced?"

"Yes, here's an invitation in the *Budget* to Orangemen to attend the funeral of a brother sometime of the banks of the Boyne!"

"Who's the Master of the Lodge?" asked Ingolby.

Rockwell told him, urging at the same time that he see the Chief Constable as well, and Monseigneur Lourde at Manitou.

"That's exactly what I mean to do—with a num-

ber of other things. Between ourselves, Rockwell, I'd have plenty of lint and bandages ready for emergencies if I were you."

"I'll see to it. That collision the other day was serious enough, and it's gradually becoming a vendetta. Last night one of the Lebanon champions lost his nose."

"His nose—how?"

"A French river-driver bit a third of it off."

Ingolby made a gesture of disgust. "And this is the twentieth century!"

They had moved along the street until they reached a barber-shop, from which proceeded the sound of a violin. "I'm going in here," Ingolby said. "I've got some business with Berry, the barber. You'll keep me posted as to anything important?"

"You don't need to say it. Shall I see the Master of the Orange Lodge or the Chief Constable for you?"

Ingolby thought for a minute. "No, I'll tackle them myself, but you get in touch with Monseigneur Lourde. He's grasped the situation, and though he'd like to have Tripple boiled in oil, he doesn't want broken heads and bloodshed."

"And Tripple?"

"I'll deal with him at once. I've got a hold on him. I never wanted to use it, but I will now without compunction. I have the means in my pocket. They've been there for three days, waiting for the chance."

"It doesn't look like war, does it?" said Rockwell, looking up the street and out towards the prairie where the day bloomed like a flower. Blue above—

a deep, joyous blue, against which a white cloud rested or slowly travelled westward; a sky down whose vast cerulean bowl flocks of wild geese sailed, white and grey and black, while the woods across the Sagalac were glowing with a hundred colours, giving tender magnificence to the scene. The busy eagerness of a pioneer life was still a quiet orderly thing, so immense was the theatre for effort and movement. In these wide streets, almost as wide as a London square, there was room to move; nothing seemed huddled, pushing, or inconvenient. Even the disorder of building lost its ugly crudity in the space and the sunlight.

"The only time I get frightened in life is when things look like that," Ingolby answered. "I go round with a life-preserver on me when it seems as if 'all's right with the world.'"

The violin inside the barber-shop kept scraping out its cheap music—a coon-song of the day.

"Old Berry hasn't much business this morning," remarked Rockwell. "He's in keeping with this surface peace."

"Old Berry never misses anything. What we're thinking, he's thinking. I go fishing when I'm in trouble; Berry plays his fiddle. He's a philosopher and a friend."

"You don't make friends as other people do."

"I make friends of all kinds. I don't know why, but I've always had a kind of kinship with the roughs, the no-accounts, and the rogues."

"As well as the others—I hope I don't intrude!"

Ingolby laughed. "You? Oh, I wish all the others

were like you. It's the highly respectable members of the community I've always had to watch."

The fiddle-song came squeaking out upon the sunny atmosphere. It arrested the attention of a man on the other side of the street—a stranger in strange Lebanon. He wore a suit of Western clothes as a military man wears mufti, if not awkwardly, yet with a manner not wholly natural—the coat too tight across the chest, too short in the body. However, the man was handsome and unusual in his leopard way, with his brown curling hair and well-cared-for moustache.

It was Jethro Fawe.

Attracted by the sound of the violin he stayed his steps and smiled scornfully. Then his look fell on the two figures at the door of the barber-shop, and his eyes flashed.

Here was the man he wished to see—Max Ingolby, the man who stood between him and his Romany lass. Here was a chance of speaking face to face with the man who was robbing him. What he should do when they met must be according to circumstances. That did not matter. There was the impulse storming in his brain, and it drove him across the street as the Boss Doctor walked away, and Ingolby entered the shop. All Jethro realized was that the man who stood in his way, the big, rich masterful Gorgio was there.

He entered the shop after Ingolby, and stood for an instant unseen. The old negro barber with his curly white head, slave-black face, and large, shrewd, meditative eyes was standing in a corner with a violin

under his chin, his cheek lovingly resting against it, as he drew his bow through the last bars of the melody. He had smiled in welcome as Ingolby entered, instantly rising from his stool, but continuing to play. He would not have stopped in the middle of a tune for an emperor, and he put Ingolby higher than an emperor. For one who had been born a slave and had still the scars of the overseer's whip on his back, he was very independent. He cut everybody's hair as he wanted to cut it, trimmed each beard as he wished to trim it, regardless of its owner's wishes. If there was dissent, then his customer need not come again, that was all. There were other barbers in the place, but Berry was the master barber. To have your head massaged by him was never to be forgotten, especially if you found your hat too small for your head in the morning. Also he singed the hair with a skill and care, which had filled many a thinly covered scalp with luxuriant growth, and his hair-tonic, known as "Smilax," gave a pleasant odour to every meeting-house or church or public hall where the people gathered. Berry was an institution even in this new Western town. He kept his place and he forced the white man, whoever he was, to keep his place.

When he saw Jethro Fawe enter the shop he did not stop playing, but his eyes searched the newcomer. Following his glance, Ingolby turned round and saw the Romany. His first impression was one of admiration, but suspicion was quickly added. He was a good judge of men, and there was something secluded about the man, which repelled him. Yet

he was interested. The dark face had a striking racial peculiarity.

The music died away, and old Berry lowered the fiddle from his chin and gave his attention to the Romany.

"Yeth-'ir?" he said questioningly.

For an instant Jethro was confused. When he entered the shop he had not made up his mind what he should do. It had been mere impulse and the fever of his brain.

As old Berry spoke, however, his course opened out.

"I heard. I am a stranger. My fiddle is not here. My fingers itch for the cat-gut. Eh?"

The look in old Berry's face softened a little. His instinct had been against his visitor, and he had been prepared to send him to another shop—besides, not every day could he talk to the greatest man in the West.

"If you can play, there it is," he said after a slight pause, and handed the fiddle over.

It was true that Jethro Fawe loved the fiddle. He had played it in many lands. Twice, in order to get inside the palace of a monarch for a purpose—once in Berlin and once in London—he had played the second violin in a Tzigany orchestra. He turned the fiddle slowly round, looking at it with mechanical intentness. Through the passion of emotion the sure sense of the musician was burning. His fingers smoothed the oval brown breast of the instrument with affection. His eyes found joy in the colour of the wood, which had all the graded, merging tints of Autumn leaves.

"It is old—and strange," he said, his eyes going from Berry to Ingolby and back again with a veiled look, as though he had drawn down blinds before his inmost thoughts. "It was not made by a professional."

"It was made in the cotton-field by a slave," observed old Berry sharply, yet with a content which overrode antipathy to his visitor.

Jethro put the fiddle to his chin, and drew the bow twice or thrice sweepingly across the strings. Such a sound had never come from Berry's violin before. It was the touch of a born musician, who certainly had skill, but who had infinitely more of musical passion.

"Made by a slave in the cotton-fields!" Jethro said with a veiled look, and as though he was thinking of something else: "*Dordi*, I'd like to meet a slave like that!"

At the Romany exclamation Ingolby swept the man with a searching look. He had heard the Romany wife of Ruliff Zaphe use the word many years ago when he and Charley Long visited the big white house on the hill. Was the man a Romany, and, if so, what was he doing here? Had it anything to do with Gabriel Druse and his daughter? But no—what was there strange in the man being a Romany and playing the fiddle? Here and there in the West, during the last two years, he had seen what he took to be Romany faces. He looked to see the effect of the stranger's remark on old Berry.

"I was a slave, and I was like that. My father

made that fiddle in the cotton-fields of Georgia," the aged barber said.

The son of a race which for centuries had never known country or flag or any habitat, whose freedom was the soul of its existence, if it had a soul; a freedom defying all the usual laws of social order—the son of that race looked at the negro barber with something akin to awe. Here was a man who had lived a life which was the staring antithesis of his own, under the whip as a boy, confined to compounds; whose vision was constricted to the limits of an estate; who was at the will of one man, to be sold and trafficked with like a barrel of herrings, to be worked at another's will—and at no price! This was beyond the understanding of Jethro Fawe. But awe has the outward look of respect, and old Berry, who had his own form of vanity, saw that he had had a rare effect on the fellow, who evidently knew all about fiddles. Certainly that was a wonderful sound he had produced from his own cotton-field fiddle.

In the pause Ingolby said to Jethro Fawe, "Play something, won't you? I've got business here with Mr. Berry, but five minutes of good music won't matter. We'd like to hear him play—wouldn't we, Berry?"

The old man nodded assent. "There's plenty of music in the thing," he said, "and a lot could come out in five minutes, if the right man played it."

His words were almost like a challenge, and it reached to Jethro's innermost nature. He would show this Gorgio robber what a Romany could do,

and do as easily as the birds sing. The Gorgio was a money-master they said, but he would find that a Romany was a master, too, in his own way. He thought of one of the first pieces he had ever heard, a rhapsody which had grown and grown, since it was first improvised by a Tzigany in Hungary. He had once played it to an English lady at the Amphitryon Club in London, and she had swooned in the arms of her husband's best friend. He had seen men and women avert their heads when he had played it, daring not to look into each other's eyes. He would play it now—a little of it. He would play it to *her*—to the girl who had set him free in the Sagalac woods, to the ravishing deserter from her people, to the only woman who had told him the truth in all his life, and who insulated his magnetism as a ground-wire insulates lightning. He would summon her here by his imagination, and tell her to note how his soul had caught the music of the spheres. He would surround himself with an atmosphere of his own. His rage, his love, and his malignant hate, his tenderness and his lust should fill the barber's shop with a flood which would drown the Gorgio raider. He laughed to himself, almost unconsciously. Then suddenly he leaned his cheek to the instrument and drew the bow across the strings with a savage softness. The old cotton-field fiddle cried out with a thrilling, exquisite pain, but muffled, as a hand at the lips turns agony into a tender moan. Some one—some spirit—in the fiddle was calling for its own.

Five minutes later—a five minutes in which peo-

ple gathered at the door of the shop, and heads were thrust inside in ravished wonder—the palpitating Romany lowered the fiddle from his chin, and stood for a minute looking into space, as though he saw a vision.

He was roused by old Berry's voice. "Das a fiddle I wouldn't sell for a t'ousand dollars. If I could play like dat I wouldn't sell it for ten t'ousand. You kin play a fiddle to make it worth a lot—you."

The Romany handed back the instrument. "It's got something inside it that makes it better than it is. It's not a good fiddle, but it has something—ah, man alive, it has something!" It was as though he was talking to himself.

Berry made a quick, eager gesture. "It's got the cotton-fields and the slave days in it. It's got the whip and the stocks in it; it's got the cry of the old man that 'd never see his children ag'in. That's what the fiddle's got in it."

Suddenly, in an apparent outburst of anger, he swept down on the front door and drove the gathering crowd away.

"Dis is a barber-shop," he said with an angry wave of his hand; "it ain't a circuse."

One man protested. "I want a shave," he said. He tried to come inside, but was driven back.

"I ain't got a razor that 'd cut the bristle off your face," the old barber declared peremptorily; "and, if I had, it wouldn't be busy on you. I got two customers, and that's all I'm going to take befo' I have my dinner. So you git away. There ain't goin' to be no more music."

The crowd drew off, for none of them cared to offend this autocrat of the shears and razor.

Ingolby had listened to the music with a sense of being swayed by a wind which blew from all quarters of the compass at once. He loved music; it acted as a clearing-house to his mind; and he played the piano himself with the enthusiasm of a wilful amateur, who took liberties with every piece he essayed. There was something in this fellow's playing which the great masters, such as Paganini, must have had. As the music ceased, he did not speak, but remained leaning against the great red-plush barber's chair looking reflectively at the Romany. Berry, however, said to the still absorbed musician, "Where did you learn to play?"

The Romany started, and a flush crossed his face. "Everywhere," he answered sullenly.

"You've got the thing Sarasate had," Ingolby observed. "I only heard him play but once—in London years ago: but there's the same something in it. I bought a fiddle of Sarasate. I've got it now."

"Here in Lebanon?" The eyes of the Romany were burning. An idea had just come into his brain. Was it through his fiddling that he was going to find a way to deal with this Gorgio, who had come between him and his own?

"Only a week ago it came," Ingolby replied. "They actually charged me Customs duty on it. I'd seen it advertised, and I made an offer and got it at last."

"You have it here—at your house here?" asked old Berry in surprise.

"It's the only place I've got. Did you think I'd put it in a museum? I can't play it, but there it is for anyone that can play. How would you like to try it?" he added to Jethro in a friendly tone. "I'd give a good deal to see it under your chin for an hour. Anyhow, I'd like to show it to you. Will you come?"

It was like him to bring matters to a head so quickly.

The Romany's eyes glistened. "To play the Sarasate alone to you?" he asked.

"That's it—at nine o'clock to-night, if you can."

"I will come—yes, I will come," Jethro answered, the lids drooping over his eyes in which were the shadows of the first murder of the created world.

"Here is my address, then." Ingolby wrote something on his visiting-card. "My man 'll let you in, if you show that. Well, good-bye."

The Romany took the card, and turned to leave. He had been dismissed by the swaggering Gorgio, as though he was a servant, and he had not even been asked his name, of so little account was he! He could come and play on the Sarasate to the masterful Gorgio at the hour which the masterful Gorgio fixed—think of that! He could be a servant to the pleasure of the man who was stealing from him the wife sealed to him in the Roumelian country. But perhaps it was all for the best—yes, he would make it all for the best! As he left the shop, however, and passed down the street his mind remained in the barber-shop. He saw in imagination the masterful Gorgio in the red-plush chair, and the negro

barber bending over him, with black fingers holding the Gorgio's chin, and an open razor in the right hand lightly grasped. A flash of malicious desire came into his eyes as the vision shaped itself in his imagination, and he saw himself, instead of the negro barber, holding the Gorgio chin and looking down at the Gorgio throat with the razor, not lightly, but firmly grasped in his right hand. How was it that more throats were not cut in that way? How was it that while the scissors passed through the beard of a man's face the points did not suddenly slip up and stab the light from helpless eyes! How was it that men did not use their chances? He went lightly down the street, absorbed in a vision which was not like the reality; but it was evidence that his visit to Max Ingolby's house was not the visit of a virtuoso alone, but of an evil spirit.

As the Romany disappeared, Max Ingolby had his hand on the old barber's shoulder. "I want one of the wigs you made for that theatrical performance of the Mounted Police, Berry," he said. "Never mind what it's for. I want it at once—one with the long hair of a French-Canadian *coureur-de-bois*. Have you got one?"

"Suh, I'll send it round—no, I'll bring it round as I come from dinner. Want the clothes, too?'

"No. I'm arranging for them with Osterhaut. I've sent word by Jowett."

"You want me to know what's it's for?"

"You can know anything I know—almost, Berry. You're a friend of the right sort, and I can trust you."

"Yeth-'ir, I bin some use to you, onct or twict, I guess."

"You'll have a chance to be of use more than ever presently."

"Suh, there's goin' to be a bust-up, but I know who's comin' out on the top. That Felix Marchand and his roughs can't down you. I hear and see a lot, and there's two or three things I was goin' to put befo' you; yeth-'ir."

He unloaded his secret information to his friend, and was rewarded by Ingolby suddenly shaking his hand warmly.

"That's the line," Ingolby said decisively. "When do you go over to Manitou again to cut old Hector Marchand's hair? Soon?"

"To-day is his day—this evening," was the reply.

"Good. You wanted to know what the wig and the *habitant's* clothes are for, Berry—well, for me to wear in Manitou. In disguise I'm going there to-night among them all, among the roughs and toughs. I want to find out things for myself. I can speak French as good as most of 'em, and I can chew tobacco and swear with the best."

"You suhly are a wonder," said the old man admiringly. "How you fin' the time I got no idee."

"Everything in its place, Berry, and everything in its time. I've got a lot to do to-day, but it's in hand, and I don't have to fuss. You'll not forget the wig—you'll bring it round yourself?"

"Suh. No snoopin' into the parcel then. But if you go to Manitou to-night, how can you have that fiddler?"

"He comes at nine o'clock. I'll go to Manitou later. Everything in its own time."

He was about to leave the shop when some one came bustling in. Berry was between Ingolby and the door, and for an instant he did not see who it was. Presently he heard an unctuous voice: "Ah, good day, good day, Mr. Berry. I want to have my hair cut, if you please," it said.

Ingolby smiled. The luck was with him to-day so far. The voice belonged to the Rev. Reuben Tripple, and he would be saved a journey to the manse. Accidental meetings were better than planned interviews. Old Berry's grizzled beard was bristling with repugnance, and he was about to refuse Mr. Tripple the hospitality of the shears when Ingolby said: "You won't mind my having a word with Mr. Tripple first, will you, Berry? May we use your back parlour?"

A significant look from Ingolby's eyes gave Berry his cue.

"Suh, Mr. Ingolby. I'm proud." He opened the door of another room.

Mr. Tripple had not seen Ingolby when he entered, and he recognized him now with a little shock of surprise. There was no reason why he should not care to meet the Master Man, but he always had an uncanny feeling when his eye met that of Ingolby. His apprehension had no foundation in any knowledge, yet he had felt that Ingolby had no love for him, and this disturbed the egregious vanity of a narrow nature. His slouching, corpulent figure made an effort to resist the gesture with which Ingolby

drew him to the door, but his will succumbed, and he shuffled importantly into the other room.

Ingolby shut the door quietly behind him, and motioned the minister to a chair beside the table. Tripple sank down, mechanically smiling, placed his hat on the floor, and rested his hands on the table. Ingolby could not help but notice how coarse the hands were—with fingers suddenly ending as though they had been cut off, and puffy, yellowish skin that suggested fat foods, or worse.

Ingolby came to grips at once. "You preached a sermon last night which no doubt was meant to do good, but will only do harm," he said abruptly.

The flabby minister flushed, and then made an effort to hold his own.

"I speak as I am moved," he said, puffing out his lips.

"You spoke on this occasion before you were moved—just a little while before," answered Ingolby grimly. "The speaking was last night, the moving comes to-day."

"I don't get your meaning," was the thick rejoinder. The man had a feeling that there was some real danger ahead.

"You preached a sermon last night which might bring riot and bloodshed between these two towns, though you knew the mess that's brewing."

"My conscience is my own. I am responsible to my Lord for words which I speak in His name, not to you."

"Your conscience belongs to yourself, but your acts belong to all of us. If there is trouble at the

Orange funeral to-morrow it will be your fault. The blame will lie at your door."

"The sword of the Spirit——"

"Oh, you want the sword, do you? You want the sword, eh?" Ingolby's jaw was set now like a millstone. "Well, you can have it, and have it now. If you had taken what I said in the right way, I would not have done what I'm going to do. I'm going to send you out of Lebanon. You're a bad and dangerous element here. You must go."

"Who are you to tell me I must go?"

The fat hands quivered on the table with anger and emotion, but also with fear of something. "You may be a rich man and own railways, but——"

"But I am not rich and I don't own railways. Lately bad feeling has been growing on the Sagalac, and only a spark was needed to fire the ricks. You struck the spark in your sermon last night. I don't see the end of it all. One thing is sure—you're not going to take the funeral service to-morrow."

The slack red lips of the man of God were gone dry with excitement, the loose body swayed with the struggle to fight it out.

"I'll take no orders from you," the husky voice protested. "My conscience alone will guide me. I'll speak the truth as I feel it, and the people will stand by me."

"In that case you *will* take orders from me. I'm going to save the town from what hurts it, if I can. I've got no legal rights over you, but I have moral rights, and I mean to enforce them. You gabble of

conscience and truth, but isn't it a new passion with you—*conscience and truth?*"

He leaned over the table and fastened the minister's eyes with his own. "Had you the same love of conscience and truth at Radley?"

A whiteness passed over the flabby face, and the beady eyes took on a glazed look. Fight suddenly died out of them.

"You went on a missionary tour on the Ottawa River. At Radley you toiled and rested from your toil—and feasted. The girl had no father or brother, but her uncle was a railway-man. He heard where you were, and he hired with my company to come out here as a foreman. He came to drop on you. The day after he came he had a bad accident. I went to see him. He told me all; his nerves were unstrung, you observe. He meant to ruin you, as you ruined the girl. He had proofs enough. The girl herself is in Winnipeg. Well, I know life, and I know man and man's follies and temptations. I thought it a pity that a career and a life like yours should be ruined——"

A groan broke from the twitching lips before him, and a heavy sweat stood out on the round, rolling forehead.

"If the man spoke, I knew it would be all up with you, for the world is very hard on men of God who fall. I've seen men ruined before this, because of an hour's passion and folly. I said to myself that you were only human, and that maybe you had paid heavy in remorse and fear. Then there was the honour of the town—of Lebanon. I couldn't let the

thing take its course. I got the doctor to tell the man that he must go for special treatment to a hospital in Montreal, and I—well, I bought him off on his promising to keep his mouth shut. He was a bit stiff in terms, because he said the girl needed the money. The child died, luckily for you. Anyhow I bought him off, and he went. That was a year ago. I've got all the proofs in my pocket, even to the three silly letters you wrote her when your senses were stronger than your judgment. I was going to see you about them to-day."

He took from his pocket a small packet, and held them before the other's face. "Have a good look at your own handwriting, and see if you recognize it," Ingolby continued.

But the glazed, shocked eyes did not see. Reuben Tripple had passed the several stages of horror during Ingolby's merciless arraignment, and he had nearly collapsed before he heard the end of the matter. When he knew that Ingolby had saved him, his strength gave way, and he trembled violently. Ingolby looked round and saw a jug of water. Pouring out a glassful, he thrust it into the fat, wrinkled fingers.

"Drink and pull yourself together," he said sternly.

The shaken figure straightened itself, and the water was gulped down. "I thank you," he said in a husky voice.

"You see I treated you fairly, and that you've been a fool?" Ingolby asked with no lessened determination.

"I have tried to atone, and——"

"No, you haven't had the right spirit to atone. You were fat with vanity and self-conceit. I've watched you."

"In future I will——"

"Well, that rests with yourself, but your health is bad, and you're not going to take the funeral to-morrow. You've had a sudden breakdown, and you're going to get a call from some church in the East—as far East as Yokohama or Bagdad, I hope; and leave here in a few weeks. You understand? I've thought the thing out, and you've got to go. You'll do no good to yourself or others here. Take my advice, and wherever you go, walk six miles a day at least, work in a garden, eat half as much as you do, and be good to your wife. It's bad enough for any woman to be a parson's wife, but to be a parson's wife and your wife, too, wants a lot of fortitude."

The heavy figure lurched to the upright, and steadied itself with a force which had not yet been apparent.

"I'll do my best—so help me God!" he said and looked Ingolby squarely in the face for the first time.

"All right, see you keep your word," Ingolby replied, and nodded good-bye.

The other went to the door, and laid a hand on the knob.

Suddenly Ingolby stopped him, and thrust a little bundle of bills into his hand. "There's a hundred dollars for your wife. It 'll pay the expense of moving," he said.

A look of wonder, revelation and gratitude crept into Tripple's face. "I will keep my word, so help me God!" he said again.

"All right, good-bye," responded Ingolby abruptly, and turned away.

A moment afterwards the door closed behind the Rev. Reuben Tripple and his influence in Lebanon.

"I couldn't shake hands with him," said Ingolby to himself, "but I'm glad he didn't sniffle. There's some stuff in him—if it only has a chance."

"I've done a good piece of business, Berry," he said cheerfully as he passed through the barber-shop.

"Suh, if you say so," said the barber, and they left the shop together.

CHAPTER IX

MATTER AND MIND AND TWO MEN

PROMPTLY at nine o'clock Jethro Fawe knocked at Ingolby's door, and was admitted by the mulatto man-servant Jim Beadle, who was to Ingolby like his right hand. It was Jim who took command of his house, "bossed" his two female servants, arranged his railway tours, superintended his kitchen—with a view to his own individual tastes; valeted him, kept his cigars within a certain prescribed limit by a firm actuarial principle which transferred any surplus to his own use; gave him good advice, weighed up his friends and his enemies with shrewd sense; and protected him from bores and cranks, borrowers and "dead-beats."

Jim was accustomed to take a good deal of responsibility, and had more than once sent people to the right-about who had designs on his master, even though they came accredited. On such occasions he did not lie to protect himself when called to account, but told the truth pertinaciously. He was obstinate in his vanity, and carried off his mistakes with aplomb. When asked by Ingolby what he called the Governor General when he took His

Excellency over the new railway in Ingolby's private car, he said, "I called him what everybody called him. I called him 'Succelency.'" And "Succelency" for ever after the Governor General was called in the West. Jim's phonetic mouthful gave the West a roar of laughter and a new word to the language. On another occasion Jim gave the West a new phrase to its vocabulary which remains to this day. Having to take the wife of a high personage of the neighbouring Republic over the line in the private car, he had astounded his master by presenting a bill for finger-bowls before the journey began. Ingolby said to him, "Jim, what the devil is this—finger-bowls in my private car? We've never had finger-bowls before, and we've had everybody as was anybody to travel with us." Jim's reply was final. "Say," he replied, "we got to have 'em. Soon's I set my eyes on that lady I said, 'She's a finger-bowl lady.'"

"'Finger-bowl lady' be hanged, Jim, we don't—" Ingolby protested, but Jim waved him down.

"Say," he said decisively, "she'll ask for them finger-bowls—she'll ask for 'em, and what'd I do if we hadn't got 'em?"

She did ask for them; and henceforth the West said of any woman who put on airs and wanted what she wasn't born to, "She's a finger-bowl lady."

It was Jim who opened the door to Jethro Fawe, and his first glance was one of prejudice. His quick perception saw that the Romany wore clothes not natural to him. He felt the artificial element, the quality of disguise. He was prepared to turn the

visitor away, no matter what he wanted, but Ingolby's card handed to him by the Romany made him pause. He had never known his master give a card like that more than once or twice in the years they had been together. He fingered the card, scrutinized it carefully, turned it over, looked heavenward reflectively, as though the final permission for the visit remained with him, and finally admitted the visitor.

"Mr. Ingolby ain't in," he said. "He went out a little while back. You got to wait," he added sulkily, as he showed the Romany into Ingolby's working-room.

As Jim did so, he saw lying on a chair a suit of clothes on top of which were a wig and false beard and moustache. Instantly he got between the visitor and the make-up. The parcel was closed when he was in the room a half-hour before. Ingolby had opened it since, had been called out, and had forgotten to cover the things up or put them away.

"Sit down," Jim said to the Romany, still covering the disguise. Then he raised them in his arms, and passed with them into another room, muttering angrily to himself.

The Romany had seen, however. They were the first things on which his eyes had fallen when he entered the room. A wig, a false beard, and workman's clothes! What were they for? Were these disguises for the Master Gorgio? Was *he* to wear them? If so, he—Jethro Fawe—would watch and follow him wherever he went. Had these disguises to do with Fleda—with his Romany lass?

His pulses throbbed; he was in an overwrought mood. He was ready for any illusion, susceptible to any vagary of the imagination.

He looked round the room. So this was the way the swaggering, masterful Gorgio lived?

Here were pictures and engravings which did not seem to belong to a new town in a new land, where everything was useful or spectacular. Here was a sense of culture and refinement. Here were finished and unfinished water-colours done by Ingolby's own hand or bought by him from some hard-up artist earning his way mile by mile, as it were. Here were books, not many, but well-bound and important-looking, covering fields in which Jethro Fawe had never browsed, into which, indeed, he had never entered. If he had opened them he would have seen a profusion of marginal notes in pencil, and slips of paper stuck in the pages to mark important passages.

He turned from them to the welcome array of weapons on the walls—rifles, shotguns, Indian bows, arrows and spears, daggers and great sheath-knives such as are used from the Yukon to Bolivia, and a sabre with a faded ribbon of silk tied to the handle. This was all that Max Ingolby had inherited from his father—that artillery sabre which he had worn in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny. Jethro's eyes wandered eagerly over the weapons, and, in imagination, he had each one in his hand. From the pained, angry confusion he felt when he looked at the books had emerged a feeling of fanaticism, of feud and war, in which his spirit regained its own

kind of self-respect. In looking at the weapons he was as good a man as any Gorgio. Brains and books were one thing, but the strong arm, the quick eye, and the deft lunge home with the sword or dagger were better; they were of a man's own skill, not the acquired skill of another's brains which books give. He straightened his shoulders till he looked like a modern actor playing the hero in a romantic drama, and with quick vain motions he stroked and twisted his brown moustache, and ran his fingers through his curling hair. In truth he was no coward; and his conceit would not lessen his courage when the test of it came.

As his eyes brightened from gloom and sullenness to valiant enmity, they suddenly fell on a table in a corner where lay a black coffin-shaped thing of wood. In this case, he knew, was the Sarasate violin. Sarasate—once he had paid ten lire to hear Sarasate play the fiddle in Turin, and the memory of it was like the sun on the clouds to him now. In music such of him as was real found a home. It fed everything in him—his passion, his vanity; his vagabond taste, his emotions, his self-indulgence, his lust. It was the means whereby he raised himself to adventure and to pilgrimage, to love and license and loot and spying and secret service here and there in the east of Europe. It was the flagellation of these senses which excited him to do all that man may do and more.

He was going to play to the masterful Gorgio, and he would play as he had never played before. He would pour the soul of his purpose into the music

—to win back, or steal back, the lass sealed to him by the Starzke River.

"*Kismet!*" he said aloud, and he rose from the chair to go to the violin, but as he did so the door opened and Ingolby entered.

"Oh, you're here, and longing to get at it," he said pleasantly.

He had seen the look in the eyes of the Romany as he entered, and noted which way his footsteps were tending. "Well, we needn't lose any time, but will you have a drink and a smoke first?" he added.

He threw his hat in a corner, and opened a spirit-table where shone a half-dozen cut-glass tumblers and several well-filled bottles, while boxes of cigars and cigarettes flanked them. It was the height of modern luxury imported from New York, and Jethro eyed it with envious inward comment. The Gorgio had the world on his key-chain! Every door would open to him—that was written on his face—unless Fate stepped in and closed all doors!

The door of Fleda's heart had already been opened, but he had not yet made his bed in it, and there was still time to help Fate, if her mystic finger beckoned.

Jethro nodded in response to Ingolby's invitation to drink. "But I do not drink much when I play," he remarked. "There's enough liquor in the head when the fiddle's in the hand. *Dadia*, I do not need the spirit to make the pulses go!"

"As little as you like then, if you'll only play as well as you did this afternoon," Ingolby said cheerily.

"I will play better," was the reply.

"On Sarasate's violin—well, of course."

"Not only because it is Sarasate's violin, *kowadji!*"

"*Kowadji!* Oh, come now, you may be a Gipsy, that doesn't mean that you're an Egyptian or an Arab. Why Arabic—why *kowadji?*"

The other shrugged his shoulders. "Who can tell! I speak many languages. I do not like the *Mister*. It is ugly in the ear. *Monsieur*, *signor*, *effendi*, *kowadji*, they have some respect in them."

"You wanted to pay me respect, eh?"

"You have Sarasate's violin!"

"I have a lot of things I could do without."

"Could you do without the Sarasate?"

"Long enough to hear you play it, Mr.—what is your name, may I ask?"

"My name is Jethro Fawe."

"Well, Jethro Fawe, my Romany *chal*, you shall show me what a violin can do."

"You know the Romany lingo?" Jethro asked, as Ingolby went over to the violin-case.

"A little—just a little."

"When did you learn it?" There was a sudden savage rage in Jethro's heart, for he imagined Fleda had taught Ingolby.

"Many a year ago when I could learn anything and remember anything and forget anything." Ingolby sighed. "But that doesn't matter, for I know only a dozen words or so, and they won't carry me far."

He turned the violin over in his hands. "This ought to do a bit more than the cotton-field fiddle," he said dryly.

He snapped the strings, looking at it with the love of the natural connoisseur. "Finish your drink and your cigarette. I can wait," he added graciously. "If you like the cigarettes, you must take some away with you. You don't drink much, that's clear, therefore you must smoke. Every man has some vice or other, if it's only hanging on to virtue too tight."

He laughed eagerly. Strange that he should have a feeling of greater companionship for a vagabond like this than for most people he met. Was it some temperamental thing in him? "Dago," as he called the Romany inwardly, there was still a bond between them. They understood the glory of a little instrument like this, and could forget the world in the light on a great picture. There was something in the air they breathed which gave them easier understanding of each other and of the world.

Suddenly with a toss Jethro drained the glass of spirit, though he had not meant to do so. He puffed the cigarette an instant longer, then threw it on the floor, and was about to put his foot on it, when Ingolby stopped him.

"I'm a slave," he said. "I've got a master. It's Jim. Jim's a hard master, too. He'd give me fits if we ground our cigarette ashes into the carpet."

He threw the refuse into a flower-pot.

"That squares Jim. Now let's turn the world inside out," he proceeded. He handed the fiddle over. "Here's the little thing that 'll let you do the trick. Isn't it a beauty, Jethro Fawe?"

The Romany took it, his eyes glistening with mingled feelings. Hatred was in his soul, and it showed

in the sidelong glance as Ingolby turned to place a chair where he could hear and see comfortably; yet he had the musician's love of the perfect instrument, and the woods and the streams and the sounds of night and the whisperings of trees and the ghosts that walked in lonely places and called across the glens—all were pouring into his brain memories which made his pulses move far quicker than the liquor he had drunk could do.

"What do you wish?" he asked as he tuned the fiddle.

Ingolby laughed good-humouredly. "Something Eastern; something you'd play for yourself if you were out by the Caspian Sea. Something that has life in it."

Jethro continued to tune the fiddle carefully and abstractedly. His eyes were half-closed, giving them a sulky look, and his head was averted. He made no reply to Ingolby, but his head swayed from side to side in that sensuous state produced by self-hypnotism, so common among the half-Eastern races. By an effort of the will they send through the nerves a flood of feeling which is half-anæsthetic, half-intoxicant. Carried into its fullest expression it drives a man amok or makes of him a howling dervish, a fanatic, or a Shakir. In lesser intensity it produces the musician of the purely sensuous order, or the dancer that performs prodigies of abandoned grace. Suddenly the sensuous exaltation had come upon Jethro Fawe. It was as though he had discharged into his system from some cells of his brain a flood which coursed like a stream of soft fire.

In the pleasurable pain of such a mood he drew his bow across the strings with a sweeping stroke, and then, for an instant, he ran hither and thither on the strings, testing the quality and finding the range and capacity of the instrument. It was a scamper of hieroglyphics which could only mean anything to a musician.

"Well, what do you think of him?" Ingolby asked as the Romany lowered the bow.

"Paganini—Joachim—Sarasate—any one, it is good enough," was the half-abstracted reply.

"It is good enough for you—almost, eh?"

Ingolby meant his question as a compliment, but an evil look shot into the Romany's face, and the bow twitched in his hand. He was not Paganini or Sarasate, but that was no reason why he should be insulted.

Ingolby's quick perception saw, however, what his words had done, and he hastened to add: "I believe you can get more out of that fiddle than Sarasate ever could, in your own sort of music anyhow. I've never heard any one play half so well the kind of piece you played this afternoon. I'm glad I didn't make a fool of myself buying the fiddle. I didn't, did I? I gave five thousand dollars for it."

"It's worth anything to the man that loves it," was the Romany's response. He was mollified by the praise he had received.

He raised the fiddle slowly to his chin, his eyes wandering round the room, then projecting themselves into space, from which they only returned to fix themselves on Ingolby with the veiled look which

sees but does not see—such a look as an oracle, or a death-god, or a soulless monster of some between-world, half-Pagan god would wear. Just such a look as Watts's "Minotaur" wears in the Tate Gallery in London.

In an instant he was away in a world which was as far off from this world as Jupiter is from Mars. It was the world of his soul's origin—a place of beautiful and yet of noisome creations also; of white mountains and green hills, and yet of tarns in which crawled evil things; a place of vagrant hurricanes and tidal-waves and cloud-bursts, of forests alive with quarrelling and affrighted beasts. It was a place where birds sang divinely, yet where obscene fowls of prey hovered in the blue or waited by the dying denizens of the desert or the plain; where dark-eyed women heard, with sidelong triumph, the whispers of passion; where sweet-faced children fled in fear from terrors undefined; where harpies and witch-women and evil souls waited in ambush; or scurried through the coverts where men brought things to die; or where they fled for futile refuge from armed foes. It was a world of unbridled will, this, where the soul of Jethro Fawe had its origin; and to it his senses fled involuntarily when he put Sarasate's fiddle to his chin this Autumn evening.

From that well of the First Things—the first things of his own life, the fount from which his forebears drew, backwards through the centuries, Jethro Fawe quickly drank his fill; and then into the violin he poured his own story—no improvisation, but musical legends and classic fantasies and folk-breath-

ings and histories of anguished or joyous haters or lovers of life; treated by the impressionist who made that which had been in other scenes to other men the thing of the present and for the men who are. That which had happened by the Starzke River was now of the Sagalac River. The passions and wild love and irresponsible deeds of the life he had lived in years gone by were here.

It was impossible for Ingolby to resist the spell of the music. Such abandonment he had never seen in any musician, such riot of musical meaning he had never heard. He was conscious of the savagery and the bestial soul of vengeance which spoke through the music, and drowned the joy and radiance and almost ghostly and grotesque frivolity of the earlier passages; but it had no personal meaning to him, though at times it seemed when the Romany came near and bent over him with the ecstatic attack of the music, as though there was a look in the black eyes like that of a man who kills. It had, of course, nothing to do with him; it was the abandonment of a highly emotional nature, he thought.

It was only after he had been playing, practically without ceasing, for three-quarters of an hour, that there came to Ingolby the true interpretation of the Romany mutterings through the man's white, wolf-like teeth. He did not shrink, however, but kept his head and watched.

Once as the musician flung his body round in a sweep of passion, Ingolby saw the black eyes flash to the weapons on the wall with a malign look which did not belong to the music alone, and he took a

swift estimate of the situation. Why the man should have any intentions against him, he could not guess, except that he might be one of the madmen who have a vendetta against the capitalist. Or was he a tool of Felix Marchand? It did not seem possible, and yet if the man was penniless and an anarchist maybe, there was the possibility. Or—the blood rushed to his face—or it might be that the Gipsy's presence here, this display of devilish antipathy, as though it were all part of the music, was due, somehow, to Fleda Druse.

The music swelled to a swirling storm, crashed and flooded the feelings with a sense of shipwreck and chaos, through which a voice seemed to cry—the quiver and delicate shrillness of one isolated string—and then fell a sudden silence, as though the end of all things had come; and on the silence the trembling and attenuated note which had quivered on the lonely string, rising, rising, piercing the infinite distance and sinking into silence again.

In the pause which followed the Romany stood panting, his eyes fixed on Ingolby with an evil exaltation which made him seem taller and bigger than he was, but gave him, too, a look of debauchery like that on the face of a satyr. Generations of unbridled emotion, of license of the fields and the covert, showed in his unguarded features.

"What did the single cry—the *motif*—express?" Ingolby asked coolly. "I know there was catastrophe, the tumblings of avalanches, but the voice that cried—the soul of a lover, was it?"

The Romany's lips showed an ugly grimace. "It

INGOLBY SAW THE BLACK EYES FLASH TO THE WEAPONS ON THE WALL

was the soul of one that betrayed a lover, going to eternal tortures."

Ingolby laughed carelessly. "It was a fine bit of work. Sarasate would have been proud of his fiddle if he could have heard. Anyhow he couldn't have played that. Is it Gipsy music?"

"It is the music of a 'Gipsy,' as you call it."

"Well, it's worth a year's work to hear," Ingolby replied admiringly, yet acutely conscious of danger. "Are you a musician by trade?" he asked.

"I have no trade." The glowing eyes kept scanning the wall where the weapons hung, and as though without purpose other than to get a pipe from the rack on the wall, Ingolby moved to where he could be prepared for any rush. It seemed absurd that there should be such a possibility; but the world was full of strange things.

"What brought you to the West?" he asked as he filled a pipe, his back almost against the wall.

"I came to get what belonged to me."

Ingolby laughed ironically. "Most of us are here for that purpose. We think the world owes us such a lot."

"I know what is my own."

Ingolby lit his pipe, his eyes reflectively scanning the other.

"Have you got it again out here—your own?"

"Not yet, but I will."

Ingolby took out his watch, and looked at it. "I haven't found it easy getting all that belongs to me."

"You have found it easier getting what belongs to some one else," was the snarling response.

Ingolby's jaw hardened. What did the fellow mean? Did he refer to money, or—was it Fleda Druse?

"See here," he said, "there's no need to say things like that. I never took anything that didn't belong to me, that I didn't win, or earn or pay for—market price or 'founder's shares'"—he smiled grimly. "You've given me the best treat I've had in many a day. I'd walk fifty miles to hear you play my Sarasate—or even old Berry's cotton-field fiddle. I'm as grateful as I can be, and I'd like to pay you for it; but as you're not a professional, and it's one gentleman to another as it were, I can only thank you—or maybe help you to get what's your own, if you're really trying to get it out here. Meanwhile, have a cigar and a drink."

He was still between the Romany and the wall, and by a movement forward sought to turn Jethro to the spirit-table. Probably this manœuvring was all nonsense, that he was wholly misreading the man; but he had always trusted his instincts, and he would not let his reason rule him entirely in such a situation. He could also ring the bell for Jim, or call to him, for while he was in the house Jim was sure to be near by; but he felt he must deal with the business alone.

The Romany did not move towards the spirit-table, and Ingolby became increasingly vigilant.

"No, I can't pay you anything, that's clear," he said; "but to get your own—I've got some influence out here—what can I do? A stranger is up against all kinds of things if he isn't a native, and you're

not. Your home and country 's a good way from here, eh?"

Suddenly the Romany faced him. "Yes. I come from places far from here. Where is the Romany's home? It is everywhere in the world, but it is everywhere inside his tent. Because his country is everywhere and nowhere, his home is more to him than it is to any other. He is alone with his wife, and with his own people. Yes, and by long and by last, he will make the man pay who spoils his home. It is all he has. Good or bad, it is all he has. It is his own."

Ingolby had a strange, disturbing premonition that he was about to hear what would startle him, but he persisted. "You said you had come here to get your own—is your home here?"

For a moment the Romany did not answer. He had worked himself into a great passion. He had hypnotized himself, he had acted for a while as though he was one of life's realities; but suddenly there passed through his veins the chilling sense of the unreal, that he was only acting a part, as he had ever done in his life, and that the man before him could, with a wave of the hand, raise the curtain on all his disguises and pretences. It was only for an instant, however, for there swept through him the feeling that Fleda had roused in him—the first real passion, the first true love—if what such as he felt can be love—that he had ever known; and he saw her again as she was in the hut in the wood defying him, ready to defend herself against him. All his erotic anger and melodramatic fervour were alive in him once more.

He was again a man with a wrong, a lover dispossessed. On the instant his veins filled with passionate blood. The Roscian strain in him had its own tragic force and reality.

"My home is where my own is, and you have taken my own from me, as I said," he burst out. "There was all the world for you, but I had only my music and my wife, and you have taken my wife from me. *Mi Duvel*, you have taken, but you shall give back again, or there will be only one of us in the world! The music I have played for you—that has told you all: the thing that was music from the beginning of Time, the will of the First of All. Fleda Druse, she was mine, she is my wife, and you, the Gorgio, come between, and she will not return to me."

A sudden savage desire came to Ingolby to strike the man in the face—this Gipsy vagabond the husband of Fleda Druse! It was too monstrous. It was an evil lie, and yet she had said she was a Romany, and had said it with apparent shame or anxiety. She had given him no promise, had pledged no faith, had admitted no love, and yet already in his heart of hearts he thought upon her as his own. Ever since the day he had held her in his arms at the Carillon Rapids her voice had sounded in his ears, and a warmth was in his heart which had never been there in all his days. This waif of barbarism even to talk of Fleda Druse as though he was of the same sphere as herself invited punishment—but to claim her as his wife! It was shameless. An ugly mood came on him, the force that had made him

what he was filled all his senses. He straightened himself; contempt of the Ishmael showed at his lips.

"I think you lie, Jethro Fawe," he said quietly, and his eyes were hard and piercing. "Gabriel Druse's daughter is not—never was—any wife of yours. She never called you husband. She does not belong to the refuse of the world."

The Romany made a sudden rush towards the wall where the weapons hung, but two arms of iron were flung out and caught him, and he was hurled across the room. He crashed against a table, swayed, missed a chair where rested the Sarasate violin, then fell to the floor; but he staggered to his feet again, all his senses in chaos.

"You almost fell on the fiddle. If you had hurt it I'd have hurt you, Mr. Fawe," Ingolby said with a grim smile. "That fiddle's got too much in it to waste it."

"*Mi Duvel! Mi Duvel!*" gasped the Romany in his fury.

"You can say that as much as you like, but if you play any more of your monkey tricks here, my Paganini, I will wring your neck," Ingolby returned, his six feet of solid flesh making a movement of menace.

"And look," he added, "since you are here, and I said what I meant, that I'd help you to get your own, I'll keep my word. But don't talk in damned riddles. Talk white men's language. You said that Gabriel Druse's daughter was your wife. Explain what you meant, and no nonsense."

The Romany made a gesture of acquiescence.

"She was made mine according to Romany law by the River Starzke seventeen years ago. I was the son of Lemuel Fawe, rightful King of all the Romanys. Gabriel Druse seized the headship, and my father gave him three thousand pounds that we should marry, she and I, and so bring the headship to the Fawes again when Gabriel Druse should die; and so it was done by the River Starzke in the Roumelian country."

Ingolby winced, for the man's words rang true. A cloud came over his face, but he said nothing. Jethro saw the momentary advantage. "You did not know?" he asked. "She did not tell you she was made my wife those years ago? She did not tell you she was the daughter of the Romany King? So it is, you see, she is afraid to tell the truth."

Ingolby's knitted bulk heaved with desire to injure. "Your wife—you melodious sinner! Do you think such tomfoolery has any effect in this civilized country? She is about as much your wife as I am your brother. Don't talk your heathenish rot here. I said I'd help you to get your own, because you played the fiddle as few men can play it, and I owe you a lot for that hour's music; but there's nothing belonging to Gabriel Druse that belongs to you, and his daughter least of all. Look out—don't sit on the fiddle, damn you!"

The Romany had made a motion as if to sit down on the chair where the fiddle was, but stopped short at Ingolby's warning. For an instant Jethro had an inclination to seize the fiddle and break it across his knees. It would be an exquisite thing to destroy

five thousand dollars' worth of this man's property at a single wrench and blow. But the spirit of the musician asserted itself before the vengeful lover could carry out his purpose, as Ingolby felt sure it would. Ingolby had purposely given the warning about the fiddle, in the belief that it might break the unwelcome intensity of the scene. He detested melodrama, and the scene came precious near to it. Men had been killed before his eyes more than once, but there had been no rodomontade even when there had been a woman in the case.

This Romany lover, however, seemed anxious to make a Sicilian drama out of his preposterous claim, and it sickened him. Who was the fellow that he should appear in the guise of a rival to himself! It was humiliating and offensive. Ingolby had his own kind of pride and vanity, and they were both hurt now. He would have been less irritable if this rival had been as good a man as himself or better. He was so much a gamester that he would have said, "Let the best man win," and have taken his chances.

His involuntary strategy triumphed for the moment. The Romany looked at the fiddle for an instant with murderous eyes, but the cool, quiet voice of Ingolby again speaking sprayed his hot virulence.

"You can make a good musician quite often, but a good fiddle is a prize-packet from the skies," Ingolby said. "When you get a good musician and a good fiddle together it's a day for a salute of a hundred guns."

Half-dazed with unregulated emotion, Jethro acted

with indecision for a moment, and the fiddle was safe. But he had suffered the indignity of being flung like a bag of bones across the room, and the microbe of insane revenge was in him. It was not to be killed by the cold humour of the man who had worsted him. He returned to the attack.

"She is mine, and her father knows it is so. I have waited all these years, and the hour has come. I will——"

Ingolby's eyes became hard and merciless again. "Don't talk your Gipsy rhetoric. I've had enough. No hour has come that makes a woman do what she doesn't want to do in a free country. The lady is free to do what she pleases here within British law, and British law takes no heed of Romany law or any other law. You'll do well to go back to your Roumelian country or whatever it is. The lady will marry whom she likes."

"She will never marry you," the Romany said huskily and menacingly.

"I have never asked her, but if I do, and she said yes, no one could prevent it."

"I would prevent it."

"How?"

"She is a Romany: she belongs to the Romany people; I will find a way."

Ingolby had a flash of intuition.

"You know well that if Gabriel Druse passed the word, your life wouldn't be worth a day's purchase. The Camorra would not be more certain or more deadly. If you do anything to hurt the daughter of Gabriel Druse, you will pay the full price, and

you know it. The Romanys don't love you better than their rightful chief."

"I am their rightful chief."

"Maybe, but if they don't say so, too, you might as well be their rightful slave. You are a genius in your way. Take my advice and return to the trail of the Gipsy. Or, there's many an orchestra would give you a good salary as leader. You've got no standing in this country. You can't do anything to hurt me except try to kill me, and I'll take my chance of that. You'd better have a drink now and go quietly home to bed. Try and understand that this is a British town, and we don't settle our affairs by jumping from a violin rhapsody to a knife or a gun." He jerked his head backwards towards the wall. "Those things are for ornament, not for use. Come, Fawe, have a drink and go home like a good citizen for one night only."

The Romany hesitated, then shook his head and muttered chaotically.

"Very well," was the decisive reply. Ingolby pressed a bell, and, in an instant, Jim Beadle was in the room. He had evidently been at the keyhole. "Jim," he said, "show the gentleman out."

But suddenly he caught up a box of cigars from the table and thrust it into the Romany's hands. "They're the best to be got this side of Havana," he said cheerily. "They'll help you put more fancy still into your playing. Good night. You never played better than you've done during the last hour, I'll stake my life on that. Good night. Show Mr. Fawe out, Jim."

The Romany had not time to thrust back the cigars upon his host, and dazed by the strategy of the thing, by the superior force and mind of the man who a moment ago he would have killed, he took the box and turned towards the door, taking his hat dazedly from Jim.

At the door, however, catching sight of the sly grin on the mulatto servant's face, his rage and understanding returned to him, and he faced the masterful Gorgio once again.

"By God, I'll have none of it!" he exclaimed roughly and threw the box of cigars on the floor of the room.

Ingolby was not perturbed. "Don't forget there's an east-bound train every day," he said meaningly, and turned his back as the door closed.

In another minute Jim entered the room. "Get the clothes and the wig and things, Jim. I must be off," he said.

"The toughs don't get going till about this time over at Manitou," responded Jim. Then he told his master about the clothes having been exposed in the room when the Romany arrived. "But I don't think he seen them," Jim added with approval of his own conduct. "I got 'em out quick as lightning. I covered 'em like a blanket."

"All right, Jim; it doesn't matter. That fellow's got other things to think of than that."

He was wrong, however. The Romany was waiting outside in the darkness not far away—watching and waiting.

CHAPTER X

FOR LUCK

FELIX MARCHAND was in the highest spirits. His clean-shaven face was wrinkled with smiles and sneers. His black hair was flung in waves of triumph over his heavily lined forehead; one hand was on his hip with brave satisfaction, the other with lighted cigarette was tossed upwards in exultation.

"I've got him. I've got him—like that!" he said, transferring the cigarette to his mouth, and clenching his right hand as though it could not be loosed by an earthquake. "For sure, it's a thing finished as the solder of a pannikin—like that."

He caught up a tin quart-pot from the bar-counter and showed the soldered bottom of it.

He was alone in the bar of Barbazon's Hotel except for one person—the youngest of the officials who had been retired from the offices of the railways when Ingolby had merged them. This was a man who had got his position originally by nepotism, and represented the worst elements of a national life where the spoils system is rooted in the popular mind. He had, however, a little residue of that

discipline which, working in a great industrial organization, begets qualms as to extreme courses.

He looked reflectively at the leaden pot and said in reply: "I'd never believe in anything where that Ingolby is concerned till I had it in the palm of my hand. He's as deep as a well, and when he's quietest it's good to look out. He takes a lot of skinning, that badger."

"He's skinned this time all right," was Marchand's reply. "To-morrow 'll be the biggest day Manitou's had since the Indian lifted his wigwam and the white man put down his store. Listen—hear them! They're coming!"

He raised a hand for silence, and a rumbling, ragged roar of voices could be heard without.

"The crowd have gone the rounds," he continued. "They started at Barbazon's and they're winding up at Barbazon's. They're drunk enough to-night to *want* to do anything, and to-morrow when they've got sore heads they'll *do* anything. They'll make that funeral look like a squeezed orange; they'll show Lebanon and Master Ingolby that we're to be bosses of our own show. The strike 'll be on after the funeral, and after the strike's begun there'll be—eh, *bien sûr!*"

He paused sharply, as though he had gone too far.

"There'll be what?" whispered the other; but Marchand made no reply, save to make a warning gesture, for Barbazon, the landlord, had entered behind the bar.

"They're coming back, Barbazon," Marchand said to the landlord, jerking his head towards the

front door. The noise of the crowd was increasing, the raucous shouts were so loud that the three had to raise their voices. "You'll do a land-office business to-night," he declared.

Barbazon had an evil face. There were rumours that he had been in gaol in Quebec for robbery, and that after he had served his time he had dug up the money he had stolen and come West. He had started the first saloon at Manitou, and had grown with the place in more senses than one. He was heavy and thick-set, with huge shoulders, big hands, and beady eyes that looked out of a stolid face where long hours, greed and vices other than drink had left their mark. He never drank spirits, and was therefore ready to take advantage of those who did drink. More than one horse and canoe and cow and ox, and acre of land, in the days when land was cheap, had come to him across the bar-counter. He could be bought, could Barbazon, and he sold more than wine and spirits. He had a wife who had left him twice because of his misdemeanours, but had returned and straightened out his house and affairs once again; and even when she went off with Lick Baldwin, a cattle-dealer, she was welcomed back without reproaches by Barbazon, chiefly because he had no morals, and her abilities were of more value to him than her virtue. On the whole, Gros Barbazon was a bad lot.

At Marchand's words Barbazon shrugged his shoulders. "The more spent to-night, the less to spend to-morrow," he growled.

"But there's going to be spending for a long time,"

Marchand answered. "There's going to be a riot to-morrow, and there's going to be a strike the next day, and after that there's going to be something else."

"What else?" Barbazon asked, his beady eyes fastened on Marchand's face.

"Something worth while—better than all the rest."

Barbazon's low forehead seemed to disappear almost, as he drew the grizzled shock of hair down, by wrinkling his forehead with a heavy frown.

"It's no damn good, m'sieu'," he growled. "Am I a fool? They'll spend money to-night, and to-morrow, and the next day, and when the row is on; and the more they spend then, the less they'll have to spend by-and-bye. It's no good. The steady trade for me—all the time. That is my idee. And the something else—what? You think there's something else that 'll be good for me? *Nom de Dieu*, there's nothing you're doing, or mean to do, but 'll hurt me and everybody."

"That's your view, is it, Barbazon?" exclaimed Marchand loudly, for the crowd was now almost at the door. "You're a nice Frenchman and patriot. That crowd 'll be glad to hear you think they're fools. Suppose they took it into their heads to wreck the place?"

Barbazon's muddy face got paler, but his eyes sharpened, and he leaned over the bar-counter, and said with a snarl: "Go to hell, and say what you like; and then I'll have something to say about *something else*, m'sieu'!"

Marchand was about to reply angrily, but he

instantly changed his mind, and before Barbazon could stop him, he sprang over the counter and disappeared into the office behind the bar.

"I won't steal anything, Barbazon," he said over his shoulder as he closed the door behind him.

"I'll see to that," Barbazon muttered stolidly, but with malicious eyes.

The front door was flung open now, and the crowd poured into the room, boisterous, reckless, though some were only sullen, watchful and angry. These last were mostly men above middle age, and of a fanatical and racially bitter type. They were not many, but in one sense they were the backbone and force of the crowd, probably the less intelligent but the more tenacious and consistent. They were black spots of gathering storm in an electric atmosphere.

All converged upon the bar. Two assistants rushed the drinks along the counter with flourishes, while Barbazon took in the cash and sharply checked the rougher element, who were inclined to treat the bar as a place for looting. Most of them, however, had a wholesome fear of Barbazon, and also most of them wished to stand well with him—credit was a good thing, even in a saloon.

For a little time the room was packed, then some of the more restless spirits, their thirst assuaged, sallied forth to taste the lager and old rye elsewhere, and "raise Cain" in the streets. When they went, it became possible to move about more freely in the big bar-room, at the end of which was a billiard-table. It was notable, however, that the more

sullen elements stayed. Some of them were strangers to each other. Manitou was a distributing point for all radiations of the compass, and men were thrown together in its streets who only saw one another once or twice a year—when they went to the woods in the Fall or worked the rivers in the Summer. Some were Mennonites, Doukhobors and Finlanders, some Swedes, Norwegians and Icelanders. Others again were birds of passage who would probably never see Manitou in the future, but they were mostly French, and mostly Catholic, and enemies of the Orange Lodges wherever they were, east or west or north or south. They all had a common ground of unity—half-savage *coureurs-de-bois*, river-drivers, railway-men, factory-hands, cattlemen, farmers, labourers; they had a gift for prejudice, and taking sides on something or other was as the breath of the nostrils to them.

The greater number of the crowd were, however, excitable, good-natured men, who were by instinct friendly, save when their prejudices were excited; and their oaths and exclamations were marvels of droll ingenuity. Most of them were still too good-humoured with drink to be dangerous, but all hoped for trouble at the Orange funeral on principle, and the anticipated strike had elements of "thrill." They were of a class, however, who would swing from what was good-humour to deadly anger in a minute, and turn a wind of mere prejudice into a hurricane of life and death with the tick of a clock. They would all probably go to the Orange funeral to-morrow in a savage spirit. Some of them were

loud in denunciation of Ingolby and "the Lebanon gang"; they joked coarsely over the dead Orangeman, but their cheerful violence had not yet the appearance of reality.

One man suddenly changed all that. He was a river-driver of stalwart proportions, with a red handkerchief round his neck, and with loose corded trousers tucked into his boots. He had a face of natural ugliness made almost repulsive by marks of smallpox. Red, flabby lips and an overhanging brow made him a figure which men would avoid on a dark night.

"Let's go over to Lebanon to-night and have it out," he said in French. "That Ingolby—let's go break his windows and give him a dip in the river. He's the curse of this city. Holy, once Manitou was a place to live in, now it's a place to die in! The factories, the mills, they're full of Protes'ants and atheists and shysters; the railway office is gone to Lebanon. Ingolby took it there. Manitou was the best town in the West; it's no good now. Who's the cause? Ingolby's the cause. Name of God, if he was here I'd get him by the throat as quick as winkin'."

He opened and shut his fingers with spasmodic malice, and glared round the room. "He's going to lock us out if we strike," he added. "He's going to take the bread out of our mouths; he's going to put his heel on Manitou, and grind her down till he makes her knuckle to Lebanon—to a lot of infidels, Protes'ants, and thieves. Who's going to stand it? I say—bagosh, I say, who's going to stand it!"

"He's a friend of the Monseigneur," ventured a factory-hand, who had a wife and children to support, and however partisan, was little ready for that which would stop his supplies.

"*Sacré baptême!* That's part of his game," roared the big river-driver in reply. "I'll take the word of Felix Marchand about that. Look at him! That Felix Marchand doesn't try to take the bread out of people's mouths. He gives money here, he gives it there. He wants the old town to stay as it is and not be swallowed up."

"Three cheers for Felix Marchand," cried some one in the throng. All cheered loudly save one old man with grizzled hair and beard, who leaned against the wall half-way down the room, smoking a corn-cob pipe. He was a French Canadian in dress and appearance, and he spat on the floor like a navvy—he had filled his pipe with the strongest tobacco that one man ever offered to another. As the crowd cheered for Felix Marchand, he made his way up towards the bar slowly. He must have been tall when he was young; now he was stooped, yet there was still something very sinewy about him.

"Who's for Lebanon?" cried the big river-driver with an oath. "Who's for giving Lebanon hell, and ducking Ingolby in the river?"

"I am—I am—I am—all of us!" shouted the crowd. "It's no good waiting for to-morrow. Let's get the Lebs by the scruff to-night. Let's break Ingolby's windows and soak him in the Sagalac. *Allons—allons gai!*"

Uproar and broken sentences, threats, oaths, and

objurgations sounded through the room. There was a sudden movement towards the door, but the exit of the crowd was stopped by a slow but clear voice speaking in French.

"Wait a minute, my friends," it cried. "Wait a minute. Let's ask a few questions first."

"Who's he?" asked a dozen voices. "What's he going to say?" The mob moved again towards the bar.

The big river-driver turned on the grizzled old man beside the bar-counter with bent shoulders and lazy, drawling speech.

"What 've you got to say about it, son?" he asked threateningly.

"Well, to ask a few questions first—that's all," the old man replied.

"You don't belong here, old cock," the other said roughly.

"A good many of us don't belong here," the old man replied quietly. "It always is so. This isn't the first time I've been to Manitou. You're a river-driver, and you don't live here either," he continued.

"What 've you got to say about it? I've been coming and going here for ten years. I belong—bagosh, what do you want to ask? Hurry up. We've got work to do. We're going to raise hell in Lebanon."

"And give hell to Ingolby," shouted some one in the crowd.

"Suppose Ingolby isn't there?" questioned the old man.

"Oh, that's one of your questions, is it?" sneered

the big river-driver. "Well, if you knew him as we do, you'd know that it's at night-time he sits studyin' how he'll cut Manitou's throat. He's home, all right. He's in Lebanon anyhow, and we'll find him."

"Well, but wait a minute—be quiet a bit," said the old man, his eyes blinking slowly at the big river-driver. "I've been 'round a good deal, and I've had some experience in the world. Did you ever give that Ingolby a chance to tell you what his plans were? Did you ever get close to him and try to figure what he was driving at? There's no chance of getting at the truth if you don't let a man state his case—but no. If he can't make you see his case then is the time to jib, not before."

"Oh, get out!" cried a rowdy English road-maker in the crowd. "We know all right what Ingolby's after."

"Eh, well, what is he after?" asked the old man, looking the other in the eye.

"What's he after? Oof—oof—oof, that's what he's after. He's for his own pocket, he's for being boss of all the woolly West. He's after keeping us poor and making himself rich. He's after getting the cinch on two towns and three railways, and doing what he likes with it all; and we're after not having him do it, you bet. That's how it is, old hoss."

The other stroked his beard with hands which, somehow, gave little indication of age, and then, with a sudden jerk forward of his head, he said:

"Oh, it's like that, eh? Is that what M'sieu' Marchand told you? That's what he said, is it?"

The big river-driver, eager to maintain his supreme

place as leader, lunged forward a step, and growled a challenge.

"Who said it? What does it matter if M'sieu' Marchand said it—it's true. If I said it, it's true. All of us in this room say it, and it's true. Young Marchand says what Manitou says."

The old man's eyes grew brighter—they were exceedingly sharp for one so old, and he said quite gently now:

"M. Marchand said it first, and you all say it afterwards—ah, bah! But listen to me; I know Max Ingolby that you think is such a villain; I know him well. I knew him when he was a little boy and——"

"You was his nurse, I suppose," cried the Englishman's voice amid a roar of laughter.

"Taught him his A-B-C—was his dear, kind teacher, eh?" hilariously cried another.

The old man appeared not to hear. "I have known him all the years since. He has only been in the West a few years, but he has lived in the world exactly thirty-three years. He never willingly did anybody harm—never. Since he came West, since he came to the Sagalac, he's brought work to Lebanon and to Manitou. There are hundreds more workmen in both the towns than there were when he came. It was he made others come with much money and build the factories and the mills. Work means money, money means bread, bread means life—so."

The big river-driver, seeing the effect of the old man's words upon the crowd, turned to them with an angry gesture and a sneer.

"I s'pose Ingolby has paid this old skeesicks for talking this swash. We know all right what Ingolby is, and what he's done. He's made war between the two towns—there's hell to pay now on both sides of the Sagalac. He took away the railway offices from here, and threw men out of work. He's done harm to Manitou—he's against Manitou every time."

Murmurs of approval ran through the crowd, though some were silent, looking curiously at the forceful and confident old man. Even his bent shoulders seemed to suggest driving power rather than the weight of years. He suddenly stretched out a hand in command as it were.

"Comrades, comrades," he said, "every man makes mistakes. Even if it was a mistake for Ingolby to take away the offices from Manitou, he's done a big thing for both cities by combining the three railways."

"Monopoly," growled a voice from the crowd.

"Not monopoly," the old man replied with a ring to his voice, which made it younger, fresher. "Not monopoly, but better management of the railways, with more wages, more money to spend on things to eat and drink and wear, more dollars in the pocket of everybody that works in Manitou and Lebanon. Ingolby works, he doesn't loaf."

"Oh, gosh all hell, he's a dynamo," shouted a voice from the crowd. "He's a dynamo running the whole show—eh!"

The old man seemed to grow shorter, but as he thrust his shoulders forward, it was like a machine gathering energy and power.

"I'll tell you, friends, what Ingolby is trying to do," he said in a low voice vibrating with that force which belongs neither to age nor youth, but is the permanent activity uniting all ages of a man. "Of course, Ingolby is ambitious and he wants power. He tries to do the big things in the world because there is the big thing to do—for sure. Without such men the big things are never done, and other men have less work to do, and less money and poorer homes. They discover and construct and design and invent and organize and give opportunities. I am a working man, but I know what Ingolby thinks. I know what men think who try to do the big things. I have tried to do them."

The crowd were absolutely still now, but the big river-driver shook himself free of the eloquence, which somehow swayed them all, and said:

"You—you look as if you'd tried to do big things, you do, old skeesicks. I bet you never earned a hunderd dollars in your life." He turned to the crowd with fierce gestures. "Let's go to Lebanon and make the place sing," he roared. "Let's get Ingolby out to talk for himself, if he wants to talk. We know what we want to *do*, and we're not going to be bossed. He's for Lebanon and we're for Manitou. Lebanon means to boss us, Lebanon wants to sit on us because we're Catholics, because we're French, because we're honest."

Again a wave of revolution swept through the crowd. The big river-driver represented their natural instincts, their native fanaticism, their prejudices. But the old man spoke once more.

"Ingolby wants Lebanon and Manitou to come together, not to fall apart," he declared. "He wants peace. If he gets rich here he won't get rich alone. He's working for both towns. If he brings money from outside, that's good for both towns. If he——"

"Shut your mouth, let Ingolby speak for himself," snarled the big river-driver. "Take his dollars out of your pocket and put them on the bar, the dollars Ingolby gives you to say all this. Put them dollars of Ingolby's up for drinks, or we'll give you a jar that 'll shake you, old wart-hog."

At that instant a figure forced itself through the crowd, and broke into the packed circle which was drawing closer upon the old man.

It was Jethro Fawe. He flung a hand out towards the old man.

"You want Ingolby—well, that's Ingolby," he shouted.

Like lightning the old man straightened himself, snatched the wig and beard away from his head and face, and with quiet fearlessness said:

"Yes, I am Ingolby."

For an instant there was absolute silence, in which Ingolby weighed his chances. He was among enemies. He had meant only to move among the crowd to discover their attitude, to find things out for himself. He had succeeded, and his belief that Manitou could be swayed in the right direction if properly handled was correct. Beneath the fanaticism and the racial spirit was human nature; and until Jethro Fawe had appeared, he had hoped to prevent violence and the collision at to-morrow's funeral.

Now the situation was all changed. It was hard to tell what sharp turn things might take. He was about to speak, but suddenly from the crowd there was spat out at him the words, "Spy! Sneak! Spy!"

Instantly the wave of feeling ran against him. He smiled frankly, however, with that droll twist of his mouth which had won so many, and the raillery of his eyes was more friendly than any appeal.

"Spy, if you like, my friends," he said firmly and clearly. "Moses sent spies down into the Land of Promise, and they brought back big bunches of grapes. Well, I've come down into a land of promise. I wanted to know just how you all feel without being told it by some one else. I knew if I came here as Max Ingolby I shouldn't hear the whole truth; I wouldn't see exactly how you see, so I came as one of you, and you must admit, my French is as good as yours almost."

He laughed and nodded at them.

"There wasn't one of you that knew I wasn't a Frenchman. That's in my favour. If I know the French language as I do, and can talk to you in French as I've done, do you think I don't understand the French people, and what you want and how you feel? I'm one of the few men in the West that can talk your language. I learned it when I was a boy, so that I might know my French fellow-countrymen under the same flag, with the same King and the same national hope. As for your religion, God knows, I wish I was as good a Protestant as lots of you are good Catholics. And I tell you this,

I'd be glad to have a minister that I could follow and respect and love as I respect and love Monseigneur Lourde of Manitou. I want to bring these two towns together, to make them a sign of what this country is, and what it can do; to make hundreds like ourselves in Manitou and Lebanon work together towards health, wealth, comfort and happiness. Can't you see, my friends, what I'm driving at? I'm for peace and work and wealth and power—not power for myself alone, but power that belongs to all of us. If I can show I'm a good man at my job, maybe better than others, then I have a right to ask you to follow me. If I can't, then throw me out. I tell you I'm your friend—Max Ingolby is your friend."

"Spy! Spy! Spy!" cried a new voice.

It came from behind the bar. An instant after, the owner of the voice leaped up on the counter. It was Felix Marchand. He had entered by the door behind the bar into Barbazon's office.

"When I was in India," Marchand cried, "I found a snake in the bed. I killed it before it stung me. There's a snake in the bed of Manitou—what are you going to do with it?"

The men swayed, murmured, and shrill shouts of "Marchand! Marchand! Marchand!" went up.

The crowd heaved upon Ingolby. "One minute!" he called with outstretched arm and commanding voice. They paused. Something in him made him master of them even then.

At that moment two men were fiercely fighting their way through the crowd towards where Ingolby

was. They were Jowett and Osterhaut. Ingolby saw them coming.

"Go back—go back!" he called to them.

Suddenly a drunken navvy standing on a table in front of and to the left of Ingolby seized a horseshoe hanging on the wall, and flung it with an oath.

It caught Ingolby in the forehead, and he fell to the floor without a sound.

A minute afterwards the bar was empty, save for Osterhaut, Jowett, old Barbazon, and his assistants. Barbazon and Jowett lifted the motionless figure in their arms, and carried it into a little room.

Then Osterhaut picked up the horseshoe tied with its gay blue ribbons, now stained with blood, and put it in his pocket.

"For luck," he said.

CHAPTER XI

THE SENTENCE OF THE PATRIN

FLEDA waked suddenly, but without motion; just a wide opening of the eyes upon the darkness, and a swift beating of the heart, but not the movement of a muscle. It was as though some inward monitor, some gnome of the hidden life, had whispered of danger to her slumbering spirit. The waking was a complete emergence, a vigilant and searching attention.

There was something on her breast weighing it down, yet with a pressure which was not weight alone, and maybe was not weight at all as weight is understood. Instantly there flashed through her mind the primitive belief that a cat will lie upon the breasts of children and suck their breath away. Strange and even absurd as it was, it seemed to her that a cat was pressing and pressing down upon her breast. There could be no mistaking the feline presence. Now with a sudden energy of the body, she threw the Thing from her, and heard it drop, with the softness of feline feet, on the Indian rug upon the floor.

Then she sprang out of bed, and, feeling for the

matches, lit a candle on the small table beside her bed, and moved it round, searching for what she thought to be a cat. It was not to be seen. She looked under the bed; it was not there: under the washstand, under the chest of drawers, under the improvised dressing-table; and no cat was to be found. She looked under the chair over which hung her clothes, even behind the dresses and the Indian deerskin cape hanging on the door.

There was no life of any kind save her own in the room, so far as she could see. She laughed nervously, though her heart was still beating hard. That it should beat hard was absurd, for what had she to fear—she who had lived the wild open-air life of many lands, had slept among hills infested by animals the enemy of man, and who when a little girl had faced beasts of prey alone. Yet here in her own safe room on the Sagalac, with its four walls, but its unlocked doors—for Gabriel Druse said that he could not bear that last sign of his exile—here in the fortress of the town-dweller there was a strange trembling of her pulses in the presence of a mere hallucination or nightmare—the first she had had ever. Her dreams in the past had always been happy and without the black fancies of nightmare. On the night that Jethro Fawe had first confronted her father and herself, and he had been carried to the Hut in the Wood, her sleep had been disturbed and restless, but dreamless; in her sleep on the night of the day of his release, she had been tossed upon vague clouds of mental unrest; but that was the first really disordered sleep she had ever known.

Holding the candle above her head, she looked in the mirror on her dressing-table, and laughed nervously at the shocked look in her eyes, at the hand pressed upon the bosom whose agitations troubled the delicate linen at her breast. The pale light of the candle, the reflection from the white muslin of her dressing-table and her night-wear, the strange, deep darkness of her eyes, the ungathered tawny hair falling to her shoulders, gave an unusual paleness to her face.

"What a ninny I am!" she said aloud as she looked at herself, her tongue chiding her apprehensive eyes, her laugh contemptuously adding its comment on her tremulousness. "It was a real nightmare—a waking nightmare, that's what it was."

She searched the room once more, however—every corner, under the bed, the chest of drawers and the dressing-table, before she got into bed again, her feet icily cold. And yet again before settling down she looked round, perplexed and inquiring. Placing the matches beside the candlestick, she blew out the light. Then, half-turning on her side with her face to the wall, she composed herself to sleep.

Resolutely putting from her mind any sense of the supernatural, she shut her eyes with confidence of coming sleep. While she was, however, still within the borders of wakefulness, and wholly conscious, she felt the Thing jump from the floor upon her legs, and crouch there with that deadening pressure which was not weight. Now with a start of anger she raised herself, and shot out a determined hand

to seize the Thing, whatever it was. Her hand grasped nothing, and again she distinctly heard a soft thud as of something jumping on the floor. Exasperated, she drew herself out of bed, lit the candle again, and began another search. Nothing was to be seen; but she had now the curious sense of an unseen presence. She went to the door, opened it, and looked out into the narrow hall. Nothing was to be seen there. Then she closed the door again, and stood looking at it meditatively for a moment. It had a lock and key; yet it had never been locked in the years they had lived on the Sagalac. She did not know whether the key would turn in the lock. After a moment's hesitation, she shrugged her shoulders and turned the key. It rasped, proved stubborn, but at last came home with a click. Then she turned to the window. It was open about three inches at the bottom. She closed it tight, and fastened it, then stood for a moment in the middle of the room looking at both door and window.

She was conscious of a sense of suffocation. Never in her life had she slept with door or window or tent-flap entirely closed. Never before had she been shut in all night behind closed doors and sealed windows. Now, as the sense of imprisonment was felt, her body protested; her spirit resented the funereal embrace of security. It panted for the freedom which gives the challenge to danger and the courage to face it.

She went to the window and opened it slightly at the top, and then sought her bed again; but even as she lay down, something whispered to her mind

that it was folly to lock the door and yet leave the window open, if it was but an inch. With an exclamation of self-reproach, and a vague indignation at something, she got up and closed the window once more.

Again she composed herself to sleep, lying now with her face turned to the window and the door. She was still sure that she had been the victim of a hallucination which, emerging from her sleep, had invaded the borders of wakefulness, and then had reproduced itself in a waking illusion—an imitation of its original existence.

Resolved to conquer any superstitious feeling, she invoked sleep, and was on its borders once more when she was startled more violently than before. The Thing had sprung again upon her feet and was crouched there. Wide awake, she waited for a moment to make sure that she was not mad, or that she was not asleep or in a half-dream. In the pause, she felt the Thing draw up towards her knees, dragging its body along with tiger-like closeness, and with that strange pressure which was not weight but power.

With a cry which was no longer doubt, but agonized apprehension, she threw the Thing from her with a motion of both hands and feet; and, as she did so, she felt a horrible cold air breathing from a bloodless body, chill her hand.

In another instant she was on her feet again. With shaking fingers she lighted the candle yet once more, after which she lighted a lamp standing upon the chest of drawers. The room was almost brilliantly bright now. With a gesture of incredulity

she looked round. The doors and windows were sealed tight, and there was nothing to be seen; yet she was more than ever conscious of a presence grown more manifest. For a moment she stood staring straight before her at the place where it seemed to be. She realized its malice and its hatred, and an intense anger and hatred took possession of her. She had always laughed at such things even when thrilled by wonder and manufactured terrors. But now there was a sense of conflict, of evil, of the indefinable things in which so many believed.

Suddenly she remembered an ancient Sage of her tribe, who, proficient in mysteries and secret rites gathered from nations as old as Phœnicia and Egypt and as modern as Switzerland, held the Romanys of the world in awe, for his fame had travelled where he could not follow. To Fleda in her earliest days he had been like one inspired, and as she now stood facing the intangible Thing, she recalled an exorcism which the Sage had recited to her, when he had sufficiently startled her senses by tales of the Between World. This exorcism was, as he had told her, more powerful than that which the Christian exorcists used, and the symbol of exorcism was not unlike the sign of the Cross, to which was added genuflection of Assyrian origin.

At any other time Fleda would have laughed at the idea of using the exorcism; but all the ancient superstition of the Romany people latent in her now broke forth and held her captive. Standing with candle raised above her head, her eyes piercing the space before her, she recalled every word of the

exorcism which had caught the drippings from the fountains of Chaldean, Phœnician, and Egyptian mystery.

Solemnly and slowly the exorcism came from her lips, and at the end her right hand made the cabalistic sign; then she stood like one transfixed with her arm extended towards the Thing she could not see.

Presently there passed from her a sense of oppression. The air seemed to grow lighter, restored self-possession came; there was a gentle breathing in the room like that of a sleeping child. It was a moment before she realized that the breathing was her own, and she looked round her like one who had come out of a trance.

"It is gone," she said aloud. "It is gone." A great sigh came from her.

Mechanically she put down the candle, smoothed the pillows of her bed, adjusted the coverings, and prepared to lie down; but, with a sudden impulse, she turned to the window and the door.

"It is gone," she said again. With a little laugh of hushed triumph, she turned and made again the cabalistic sign at the bed, where the Thing had first assaulted her, and then at that point in the room near the door where she had felt it crouching.

"Oh, Ewie Gal," she added, speaking to that Romany Sage long since laid to rest in the Roumelian country, "you did not talk to me for nothing. You were right—yes, you were right, old Ewie Gal. It was there,"—she looked again at the place where the Thing had been—"and your curse drove it away."

With confidence she went to the door and un-

locked it. Going to the window, she opened it also, but she compromised sufficiently to open it at the top instead of at the bottom. Presently she laid her head on her pillow with a sigh of content.

Once again she composed herself to sleep in the darkness. But now there came other invasions, other disturbers of the night. In her imagination a man came who had held her in his arms one day on the Sagalac River, who had looked into her eyes with a masterful but respectful tenderness. As she neared the confines of sleep, he was somehow mingled with visions of things which her childhood had known—moonlit passes in the Bosnian, Roumelian, and Roumanian hills, green fields by the Danube, with peasant voices drowsing in song before the lights went out; a gallop after dun deer far away up the Caspian mountains, over waste places, carpeted with flowers after a benevolent rain; mornings in Egypt, when the camels thudded and slid with melancholy ease through the sands of the desert, while the Arab drivers called shrilly for Allah to curse or bless; a tender sunset in England seen from the top of a castle when all the western sky was lightly draped with saffron, gold and mauve and delicate green and purple.

Now she slept again, with the murmur of the Sagalac in her ears, and there was a smile at her lips. If one could have seen her through the darkness, one would have said that she was like some wild creature of a virgin world, whom sleep had captured and tamed; for behind the refinement which education and the vigilant influence with which Madame

Bulteel had surrounded her, there was in her the spirit of primitive things: of the open road and the wilderness, of the undisciplined and vagrant life, however marked by such luxury as the ruler of all the Romanys could buy and use in pilgrimage. There was that in her which would drag at her footsteps in this new life.

For a full hour or more she slept, then there crept through the fantasies of sleep something that did not belong to sleep—again something from the wakeful world, strange, alien, troubling. At first it was only as though a wind stirred the air of dreams, then it was like the sounds that gather behind the coming rage of a storm, and again it was as though a night-prowler plucked at the sleeve of a home-goer. Presently, with a stir of fright and a smothered cry, she waked to a sound which was not of the supernatural or of the mind's illusions, but no less dreadful to her because of that. In some cryptic way it was associated with the direful experience through which she had just passed.

What she heard in the darkness was a voice which sang there by her window—at it or beneath it—the words of a Romany song.

It was a song of violence, which she had heard but a short time before in the trees behind her father's house, when a Romany claimed her as his wife:

"Time was I went to my true love,
Time was she came to me——"

Only one man would sing that song at her window, or anywhere in this Western world. This was no

illusion of her overwrought senses. There, outside her window, was Jethro Fawe.

She sat up and listened, leaning on one arm, and staring into the half-darkness beyond the window, the blind of which she had not drawn down. There was no moon, but the stars were shining brightly, relieving the intensity of the dark. Through the whispering of the trees, and hushing the melancholy of a night-bird's song, came the wild low note of the Romany epic of vengeance. It had a thrill of exultation. Something in the voice, insistent, vibrating, personal, made every note a thrust of victory. In spite of her indignation at the insolent serenade, she thrilled; for the strain of the Past was in her, and it had been fighting with her all night, breaking in upon the Present, tugging at the cords of youth.

The man's daring roused her admiration, even as her anger mounted. If her father heard the singing, there could be no doubt that Jethro Fawe's doom would be sealed. Gabriel Druse would resent this insolence to the daughter of the Ry of Rys. Word would be passed as silently as the electric spark flies, and one day Jethro Fawe would be found dead, with no clue to his slayer, and maybe no sign of violence upon him; for while the Romany people had remedies as old as Buddha, they had poisons as old as Sekhet.

Suddenly the song ceased, and for a moment there was silence save for the whispering trees and the night-bird's song. Fleda rose from her bed, and was about to put on her dressing-gown, when she was

startled by a voice loudly whispering her name at her window, as it seemed.

"Daughter of the Ry of Rys!" it called.

In anger she started forward to the window, then, realizing that she was in her nightgown, caught up her red dressing-gown and put it on. As she did so she understood why the voice had sounded so near. Not thirty feet from her window there was a solitary oak-tree among the pines, in which was a seat among the branches, and, looking out, she could see a figure that blackened the starlit duskiness.

"Fleda—daughter of the Ry of Rys," the voice called again.

She gathered her dressing-gown tight about her, and, going to the window, raised it high and leaned out.

"What do you want?" she asked sharply.

"Wife of Jethro Fawe, I bring you news," the voice said, and she saw a hat waved with mock courtesy.

In spite of herself, Fleda felt a shiver of premonition pass through her. The Thing which had threatened her in the night seemed to her now like the soul of this dark spirit in the trees.

Resentment seized her. "I have news for you, Jethro Fawe," she replied. "I set you free, and I gave my word that no harm should come to you, if you went your ways and did not come again. You have come, and I shall do nothing now to save you from the Ry's anger. Go at once, or I will wake him."

"Will a wife betray her husband?" he asked in soft derision.

Stung by his insolence, "I would not throw a rope to you, if you were drowning," she declared. "I am a Gorgio, and the thing that was done by the Starzke River is nothing to me. Now, go."

"You have forgotten my news," he said. "It is bad news for the Gorgio daughter of the Romany Ry."

She was silent in apprehension. He waited, but she did not speak.

"The Gorgio of Gorgios of the Sagalac has had a fall," he said.

Her heart beat fast for an instant, and then the presentiment came to her that the man spoke the truth. In the presence of the accomplished thing, she became calm.

"What has happened?" she asked quietly.

"He went prowling in Manitou, and in Barbazon's Tavern they struck him down."

"Who struck him down?" she asked. It seemed to her that the night-bird sang so loud that she could scarcely hear her own voice.

"A drunken Gorgio," he replied. "The horseshoe is for luck all the world over, and it brought its luck to Manitou to-night. It struck down a young Master Gorgio who in white beard and long grey hair went spying."

She knew in her heart that he spoke the truth.

"He is dead?" she asked in a voice that had a strange quietness.

"Not yet," he answered. "There is time to wish him luck."

She heard the ribald laugh with a sense of horror

and loathing. "The hand that brought him down may have been the hand of a Gorgio, but behind the hand was Jethro Fawe," she said in a voice grown passionate again. "Where is he?" she added.

"At his own house. I watched them take him there. It is a nice house—good enough for a Gorgio house-dweller. I know it well. Last night I played his Sarasate fiddle for him there, and I told him all about you and me, and what happened at Starzke, and then——"

"You told him I was a Romany, that I was married to you?" she asked in a low voice.

"I told him that, and asked him why he thought you had deceived him, had held from him the truth. He was angry and tried to kill me."

"That is a lie," she answered. "If he had tried to kill you he would have done so."

Suddenly she realized the situation as it was—that she was standing at her window in the night, scantily robed, talking to a man in a tree opposite her window; and that the man had done a thing which belonged to the wild places which she had left so far behind.

It flashed into her mind—what would Max Ingolby think of such a thing? She flushed. The new Gorgio self of her flushed, and yet the old Romany self, the child of race and heredity, had taken no exact account of the strangeness of this situation. It had not seemed unnatural. Even if he had been in her room itself, she would have felt no tithe of the shame that she felt now in asking herself what the Master Gorgio would think, if he knew. It was

not that she had less modesty, that any stir of sex was in her veins where the Romany *chal* was concerned; but in the life she had once lived less delicate cognizance was taken of such things, and something of it stayed.

"Listen," Jethro said with sudden lowering of the voice, and imparting into his tones an emotion which was in part an actor's gift, but also in large degree a passion now eating at his heart, "you are my wife by all the laws of our people. Nothing can change it. I have waited for you, and I will wait, but you shall be mine in the end. You see to-night—*Mi Duvel*, you see that fate is with me! The Gorgio has bewitched you. He goes down to-night in that tavern there by the hand of a Gorgio, and the Romany has his revenge. Fate is always with me, and I will be the gift of the gods to the woman that takes me. The luck is mine always. It will be always with me. I am poor to-day, I shall be rich to-morrow. I was rich, and I lost it all; and I was poor, and became rich again. Ah, yes, there are ways! Sometimes it is a Government, sometimes a prince that wants to know, and Jethro Fawe, the Romany, finds it out, and money fills his pockets. I am here, poor, because last year when I lost all, I said, 'It is because my Romany lass is not with me. I have not brought her to my *tan*, but when she comes then the gold will be here as before, and more when it is wanted.' So, I came, and I hear the road calling, and all the camping places over all the world, and I see the *patrins* in every lane, and my heart is lifted up. I am glad. I rejoice. My

heart burns with love. I will forget everything, and be true to the queen of my soul. Men die, and Gabriel Druse, he will die one day, and when the time comes, then it would be that you and I would beckon, and all the world would come to us."

He stretched out a hand to her in the half-darkness. "I send the blood of my heart to you," he continued. "I am a son of kings. Fleda, daughter of the Ry of Rys, come to me. I have been bad, but I can be good. I have killed, but I will live at peace. I have cursed, but I will speak the word of blessing. I have trespassed, but I will keep to my own, if you will come to me."

Suddenly he dropped to the ground, lighting on his feet like an animal with a soft rebound. Stretching up his arms, he made soft murmuring of endearment.

She had listened, fascinated in spite of herself by the fire and meaning of his words. She felt that in most part it was true, that it was meant; and, whatever he was, he was yet a man offering his heart and life, offering a love that she despised, and yet which was love and passion of a kind. It was a passion natural to the people from whom she came, and to such as Jethro Fawe it was something more than sensual longing and the aboriginal desire of possession. She realized it, and was not wholly revolted by it, even while her mind was fleeing to where the Master Gorgio lay wounded, it might be unto death; even while she knew that this man before her, by some means, had laid Ingolby low. She was all at once a human being torn by contending forces.

Jethro's drop to the ground broke the sudden trance into which his words had thrown her. She shook herself as with an effort of control. Then leaning over the window-sill, and, looking down at him, now grown so distinct that she could see his features, her eyes having become used to the half-light of the approaching dawn, she said with something almost like gentleness:

"Once more I say, you must go and come no more. You are too far off from me. You belong to that which is for the ignorant, or the low, the vicious and the bad. Behind the free life of the Romany is only the thing that the beasts of the field have. I have done with it for ever. Find a Romany who will marry you. As for me, I would rather die than do so, and I should die before it could come to pass. If you stay here longer I will call the Ry."

Presently the feeling that he had been responsible for the disaster to Ingolby came upon her with great force, and as suddenly as she had softened towards this man she hardened again.

"Go, before there comes to you the death you deserve," she added and turned away.

At that moment footsteps sounded near, and almost instantly there emerged from a pathway which made a short cut to the house, the figure of old Gabriel Druse. They had not heard him till he was within a few feet of where Jethro Fawe stood. His walking had been muffled in the dust of the pathway.

The Ry started when he saw Jethro Fawe; then he made a motion as though he would seize the intruder, who was too dumbfounded to flee; but he

recovered himself, and gazed up at the open window.

"Fleda!" he called.

She came to the window again.

"Has this man come here against your will?" he asked, not as though seeking information, but confirmation of his own understanding.

"He is not here by my will," she answered. "He came to sing the Song of Hate under my window, to tell me that he had——"

"That I had brought the Master Gorgio to the ground," said Jethro, who now stood with sullen passiveness looking at Gabriel Druse.

"From the Master Gorgio, as you call him, I have just come," returned the old man. "When I heard the news, I went to him. It was you who betrayed him to the mob, and——"

"Wait, wait," Fleda cried in agitation. "Is—is he dead?"

"He is alive, but terribly hurt; and he may die," was the reply.

Then the old man turned to the Romany with a great anger and determination in his face. He stretched out an arm, making a sign as cabalistic as that which Fleda had used against her invisible foe in the bedroom.

"Go, Jethro Fawe of all the Fawes," he said. "*Go, and may no patrins mark your road!*"

Jethro Fawe shrank back, and half raised his arm, as though to fend himself from a blow.

The *patrin* is the clue which Gipsies leave behind them on the road they go, that other Gipsies who travel in it may know they have gone before. It

may be a piece of string, a thread of wool, a twig, or in the dust the ancient cross of the Romany, which preceded the Christian cross and belonged to the Assyrian or Phœnician world. The invocation that no *patrins* shall mark the road of a Romany is to make him an outcast, and for the Ry of Rys to utter the curse is sentence of death upon a Romany, for thenceforward every hand of his race is against him, free to do him harm.

It was that which made Jethro Fawe shrink and cower for a moment. Fleda raised her hand suddenly in protest to Gabriel Druse.

"No, no, not that," Fleda murmured brokenly to her father, with eyes that looked the pain and horror she felt. Though she repudiated the bond by which the barbarian had dared to call her wife, she heard an inner voice that said to her: "What was done by the Starzke River was the seal of blood and race, and this man must be nearer than the stranger, dearer than the kinsman, forgiven of his crimes like a brother, saved from shame, danger or death when she who was sealed to him can save him."

She shuddered as she heard the inner voice. She felt that this Other Self of her, the inner-seeing soul which had the secret of the far paths, had spoken truly. Even as she begged her father to withdraw the sentence, it flashed into her mind that the grim Thing of the night was the dark spirit of hatred between Jethro Fawe and the Master Gorgio seeking embodiment, as though Jethro's evil soul detached itself from his body to persecute her.

At her appeal, Jethro raised his head. His courage

came back, the old insolent self-possession took hold of him again. The sentence which the Ry had passed was worse than death (and it meant death, too), for it made him an outcast from his people, and to be outcast was to be thrown into the abyss. It was as though a man without race or country was banished into desolate space. In a vague way he felt its full significance, and the shadow of it fell on him.

"No, no, no," Fleda repeated hoarsely, with that new sense of responsibility where Jethro was concerned.

Jethro's eyes were turned upon her now. In the starlit night, just yielding to the dawn, she could faintly see his burning look, could feel, as it were, his hands reach out to claim her; and she felt that while he lived she was not wholly free. She realized that the hand of nomad, disorderly barbarism was dragging her with a force which was inhuman, or, maybe, superhuman.

Gabriel Druse could know nothing of the elements fighting in his daughter's soul; he only knew that her interest in the Master Gorgio was one he had never seen before, and that she abhorred the Romany who had brought Ingolby low. He had shut his eyes to the man's unruliness and his daughter's intervention to free him; but now he was without pity. He had come from Ingolby's bedside, and had been told a thing which shook his rugged nature to its centre—a thing sad as death itself, which he must tell his daughter.

To Fleda's appeal he turned a stony face. There

was none of that rage in his words which had marked the scene when Jethro Fawe first came to claim what he could not have. There was something in him now more deadly and inevitable. It made him like some figure of mythology, implacable, fateful. His great height, his bushy beard and stormy forehead, the eyes over which shaggy eyebrows hung like the shrubs on a cliff-edge, his face lined and set like a thing in bronze—all were signs of a power which, in passion, would be like that of Œdipus: in the moment of justice or doom would, with unblinking eyes, slay and cast aside as débris is tossed upon the dust-heap.

As he spoke now his voice was toneless. His mind was flint, and his tongue was but the flash of the flint. He looked at his daughter for a moment with no light of fatherhood in his face, then turned from her to Jethro Fawe with slow decision and a gesture of authority. His eyes fastened on the face of the son of Lemuel Fawe, as though it was that old enemy himself.

"I have said what I have said, and there is no more to be spoken. The rule of the Ry will be as water for ever after if these things may be done to him and his. For generations have the Rys of all the Rys been like the trees that bend only to the whirlwind; and when they speak there is no more to be said. When it ceases to be so, then the Rys will vanish from the world, and be as stubble of the field ready for the burning. I have spoken. Go! And no *patrins* shall lie upon your road."

A look of savage obedience and sullen acquiescence

came into Jethro Fawe's face, and he took off his hat as one who stands in the presence of his master. The strain of generations, the tradition of the race without a country was stronger than the revolt in his soul. He was young, his blood was hot and brawling in his veins, he was all carnal, with the superior intelligence of the trained animal, but custom was stronger than all. He knew now that whatever he might do, some time, not far, his doom would fall upon him suddenly, as a wind shoots up a ravine from the desert, or a night-bird rises from the dark.

He set his feet stubbornly, and raised his sullen face and fanatical eyes. The light of morning was creeping through the starshine, and his features showed plainly.

"I am your daughter's husband," he said. "Nothing can change that. It was done by the River Starzke, and it was the word of the Ry of Rys. It stands for ever. There is no divorce except death for the Romany."

"The *patrins* cease to mark the way," returned the old man with a swift gesture. "The divorce of death will come."

Jethro's face grew still paler, and he opened his lips to speak, but paused, seeing Fleda, with a backward look of pity and of horror, draw back into the darkness of her room.

He made a motion of passion and despair. His voice was almost shrill when he spoke. "Till that divorce comes, the daughter of the Ry of Rys is mine," he cried sharply. "I will not give my wife

to a Gorgio thief. His hands shall not caress her, his eyes shall not feed upon her——"

"His eyes will not feed upon her," interrupted the old man: "so cease the prattle which can alter nothing. Begone."

For a moment Jethro Fawe stood like one who did not understand what was said to him, but suddenly a look of triumph and malice came into his face, and his eyes lighted with a reckless fire. He threw back his head, and laughed with a strange, offensive softness. Then, waving a hand to the window from which Fleda had gone, he swung his cap on his head and plunged into the trees.

A moment afterwards his voice came back exultingly, through the morning air:

> "But a Gorgio sleeps 'neath the greenwood tree—
> He'll broach my *tan* no more:
> And my love, she sleeps afar from me
> But near to the churchyard door."

As the old man turned heavily towards the house, and opened the outer door, Fleda met him.

"What did you mean when you said that Ingolby's eyes would not feed upon me?" she asked in a low tone of fear.

A look of compassion came into the old man's face. He took her hand.

"Come and I will tell you," he said.

CHAPTER XII

"LET THERE BE LIGHT"

IN Ingolby's bedroom, on the night of the business at Barbazon's Tavern, Dr. Rockwell received a shock. His face, naturally colourless, was almost white, and his eyes were moist. He had what the West call nerve. That the crisis through which he had passed was that of a friend's life did not lessen the poignancy of the experience. He had a singularly reserved manner and a rare economy of words; also, he had the refinement and distinction of one who had, aforetime, moved on the higher ranges of social life. He was always simply and comfortably and in a sense fashionably dressed, yet there was nothing of the dude about him, and his black satin tie gave him an air of old-worldishness which somehow compelled an extra amount of respect. This, in spite of the fact that he had been known as one who had left the East and come into the wilds because of a woman not his wife.

It was not, however, strictly true to say that he had come West because of a woman, for it was on account of three women, who by sudden coincidence or collusion sprang a situation from which the only

relief was flight. In that he took refuge, not because he was a coward, but because it was folly to fight a woman, or three women, and because it was the only real solution of an ungovernable situation. At first he had drifted from one town to another, dissolute and reckless, apparently unable to settle down, or to forget the unwholesome three. But one day there was a terrible railway accident on the construction train, and Lebanon and Manitou made a call upon his skill, and held him in bondage to his profession for one whole month. During this time he performed two operations which the surgeons who had been sent out by the Railway Directors at Montreal declared were masterpieces.

When that month was up he was a changed man, and he opened an office in Lebanon. Men trusted him despite his past, and women learned that there was never a moment when his pulses beat unevenly in their presence. Nathan Rockwell had had his lesson and it was not necessary to learn it again. To him, woman, save as a subject of his skill, was a closed book. He regarded them as he regarded himself, with a kindly cynicism. He never forgot that his own trouble could and would have been avoided had it not been for woman's vanity and consequent cruelty. The unwholesome three had shared his moral lapse with wide-open eyes, and were in no sense victims of his; but, disregarding their responsibility, they had, from sheer jealousy, wrecked his past, and, to their own surprise, had wrecked themselves as well. They were of those who act first and then think—too late.

Thus it was that both men and women called Rockwell a handsome man, but thought of him as having only a crater of exhausted fires in place of a heart. They came to him with their troubles—even the women of Manitou who ought to have gone to the priest.

He moved about Lebanon as one who had authority, and desired not to use it; as one to whom life was like a case in surgery to be treated with scientific coolness, with humanity, but not with undue sympathy; yet the early morning of the day after Ingolby had had his accident at Barbazon's Hotel found him the slave of an emotion which shook him from head to foot. He had saved his friend's life by a most skilful operation, but he had been shocked beyond control when, an hour after the operation was over, and consciousness returned to the patient in a brilliantly lighted room, Ingolby said:

"Why don't you turn on the light?"

It was thus Rockwell knew that the Master Man, the friend of Lebanon and Manitou, was—stone blind.

When Ingolby's voice ceased, a horrified silence filled the room for a moment. Even Jim Beadle, his servant, standing at the foot of the bed, clapped a hand to his mouth to stop a cry, and the nurse turned as white as the apron she wore.

Dumbfounded as Rockwell was, with instant professional presence of mind he said:

"No, Ingolby, you must be kept in darkness a while yet." Then he whipped out a silk handkerchief from his pocket. "We will have light," he

continued, "but we must bandage you first to keep out the glare and prevent pain. The nerves of the eyes have been injured."

Hastily and tenderly he bound the handkerchief round the sightless eyes. Having done so, he said to the nurse with unintentional quotation from the gospel of St. John, and a sad irony, "*Let there be light.*"

It all gave him time to pull himself together and prepare for the moment when he must tell Ingolby the truth. In one sense the sooner it was told the better, lest Ingolby should suddenly discover it for himself. Surprise and shock must be avoided. So now he talked in his low, soothing voice, telling Ingolby that the operation had put him out of danger, that the pain now felt came chiefly from the nerves of the eye, and that quiet and darkness were necessary. He insisted on Ingolby keeping silent, and he gave a mild opiate which induced several hours' sleep.

During this time Rockwell prepared himself for the ordeal which must be passed as soon as possible; gave all needed directions, and had a conference with the assistant Chief Constable to whom he confided the truth. He suggested plans for preserving order in excited Lebanon, which was determined to revenge itself on Manitou; and he gave some careful and specific instructions to Jowett the horse-dealer. Also, he had conferred with Gabriel Druse, who had helped bear the injured man to his own home. He had noted with admiration the strange gentleness of the giant Romany as he, alone, carried

Ingolby in his arms, and laid him on the bed from which he was to rise with all that he had fought for overthrown, himself the blind victim of a hard fate. He had noticed the old man straighten himself with a spring and stand as though petrified when Ingolby said, "Why don't you turn on the light?" As he looked round in that instant of ghastly silence he had observed almost mechanically that the old man's lips were murmuring something. Then the thought of Fleda Druse shot into Rockwell's mind, and it harassed him during the hours Ingolby slept, and after the giant Gipsy had taken his departure just before the dawn.

"I'm afraid it will mean more there than anywhere else," he said sadly to himself. "There was evidently something between those two; and she isn't the kind to take it philosophically. Poor girl! Poor girl! It's a bitter dose, if there was anything in it," he added.

He watched beside the sick-bed till the dawn stared in and his patient stirred and waked, then he took Ingolby's hand, grown a little cooler, in both his own. "How are you feeling, old man?" he asked cheerfully. "You've had a good sleep—nearly three and a half hours. Is the pain in the head less?"

"Better, Sawbones, better," Ingolby replied cheerfully. "They've loosened the tie that binds—begad, it did stretch the nerves. I had gripes of colic once, but the pain I had in my head was twenty times worse, till you gave the opiate."

"That's the eyes," said Rockwell. "I had to lift a bit of bone, and the eyes saw it and felt it, and

cried out—shrieked, you might say. They've got a sensitiveness all their own, have the eyes."

"It's odd there aren't more accidents to them," answered Ingolby—"just a little ball of iridescent pulp with strings tied to the brain."

"And what hurts the head may destroy the eyes sometimes," Rockwell answered cautiously. "We know so little of the delicate union between them, that we can't be sure we can put the eyes right again when, because of some blow to the head, the ricochet puts the eyes out of commission."

"That's what's the matter with me, then?" asked Ingolby, feeling the bandage on his eyes feverishly, and stirring in his bed with a sense of weariness.

"Yes, the ricochet got them, and has put them out of commission," replied Rockwell, carefully dwelling upon each word, and giving a note of meaning to his tone.

Ingolby raised himself in bed, but Rockwell gently forced him down again. "Will my eyes have to be kept bandaged long? Shall I have to give up work for any length of time?" Ingolby asked.

"Longer than you'll like," was the enigmatical reply.

"It's the devil's own business," was the weary answer. "Every minute's valuable to me now. I ought to be on deck morning, noon, and night. There's all the trouble between the two towns; there's the strike on hand; there's that business of the Orange funeral, and more than all a thousand times, there's——" he paused.

He was going to say, "There's that devil Mar-

chand's designs on my bridge," but he thought better of it and stopped. It had been his intention to deal with Marchand directly, to get a settlement of their differences without resort to the law, to prevent the criminal act without deepening a feud which might keep the two towns apart for years. Bad as Marchand was, to prevent his crime was far better than punishing him for it afterwards. To have Marchand arrested for conspiracy to commit a crime was a business which would gravely interfere with his freedom of motion in the near future, would create complications which might cripple his own purposes in indirect ways. That was why he had declared to Osterhaut that even Felix Marchand had his price, and that he would try negotiations first.

But what troubled him now, as he lay with eyes bandaged and a knowledge that to-morrow was the day fixed for the destruction of the bridge, was his own incapacity. It was unlikely that his head or his eyes would be right by to-morrow, or that Rockwell would allow him to get up. He felt in his own mind that the injury he had received was a serious one, and that the lucky horseshoe had done Marchand's work for him all too well. This thought shook him. Rockwell could see his chest heave with an excitement gravely injurious to his condition; yet he must be told the worst, or the shock of discovery by himself that he was blind might give him brain fever. Rockwell felt that he must hasten the crisis.

"Rockwell," Ingolby suddenly asked, "is there any chance of my discarding this and getting out to-morrow?" He touched the handkerchief round

his eyes. "It doesn't matter about the head bandages, but the eyes—can't I slough the wraps to-morrow? I feel scarcely any pain now."

"Yes, you can get rid of the bandages to-morrow—you can get rid of them to-day, if you really wish," Rockwell answered, closing in on the last defence.

"But I don't mind being in the dark to-day if it 'll make me fitter for to-morrow and get me right sooner. I'm not a fool. There's too much carelessness about such things. People often don't give themselves a chance to get right by being in too big a hurry. So, keep me in darkness to-day, if you want to, old man. For a hustler I'm not in too big a hurry, you see. I'm for holding back to get a bigger jump."

"You can't be in a big hurry, even if you want to, Ingolby," rejoined Rockwell, gripping the wrist of the sick man, and leaning over him.

Ingolby grew suddenly very still. It was as though vague fear had seized him and held him in a vice.

"What is it? What do you want to say to me?" he asked in a low, nerveless tone.

"You've been hit hard, Chief. The ricochet has done you up for some time. The head will soon get well, but I'm far from sure about your eyes. You've got to have a specialist about them. You're in the dark, and as for making you see, so am I. Your eyes and you are out of commission for some time, anyhow."

He leaned over hastily, but softly and deftly undid the bandages over the eyes and took them

off. "It's seven in the morning, and the sun's up, Chief, but it doesn't do you much good, you see."

The last two words were the purest accident, but it was a strange, mournful irony, and Rockwell flushed at the thought of it. He saw Ingolby's face turn grey, and then become white as death itself.

"I see," came from the bluish-white lips, as the stricken man made call on all the will and vital strength in him.

For a long minute Rockwell held the cold hand in the grasp of one who loves and grieves, but even so the physician and surgeon in him were uppermost, as they should be, in the hour when his friend was standing on the brink of despair, maybe of catastrophe irremediable. He did not say a word yet, however. In such moments the vocal are dumb and the blind see.

Ingolby heaved himself in the bed and threw up his arms, wresting them from Rockwell's grasp.

"My God—oh, my God—blind!" he cried in agony.

Rockwell drew the head with the sightless eyes to his shoulder.

For a moment he laid one hand on the heart, that, suddenly still, now went leaping under his fingers.

"Steady," he said firmly. "Steady. It may be only temporary. Keep your head up to the storm. We'll have a specialist, and you must not get mired till then. Steady, Chief."

"Chief! Chief!" murmured Ingolby, "Dear God. what a chief! I risked everything, and I've lost everything by my own vanity. Barbazon's—the

horseshoe—among the wolves, just to show I could do things better than anyone else—as if I had the patent for setting the world right. And now—now——!"

The thought of the bridge, of Marchand's devilish design, shot into his mind, and once more he was shaken. "The bridge! Blind! Mother!" he called in a voice twisted in an agony which only those can feel to whom life's purposes are even more than life itself. Then, with a moan, he became unconscious, and his head rolled over against Rockwell's cheek. The damp of his brow was as the damp of death as Rockwell's lips touched it.

"Old boy, old boy!" Rockwell said tenderly, "I wish it had been me instead. Life means so much to you—and so little to me. I've seen too much, and you've only just begun to see."

Laying him gently down, Rockwell summoned the nurse and Jim Beadle and spoke to them in low tones. "He knows now, and it has hit him hard, but not so hard that he won't stiffen to it. It might have been worse."

He gave instructions as to the care that should be taken, and replaced the bandages on the eyes. It was, however, long before Ingolby was restored to consciousness, and when it came, Rockwell put to his lips a cooling drink containing a powerful opiate. Ingolby drank it without protest and in silence. He was like one whose sense of life was automatic and of an inner rather than an outer understanding. But when he lay back on the pillow again, he said slowly:

"I want the Chief Constable to come here to-night at eight o'clock. It will be dark then. He must come. It is important. Will you see to it, Rockwell?"

He thrust out a hand as though to find Rockwell's, and there was a gratitude and an appeal in the pressure of his fingers which went to Rockwell's heart.

"All right, Chief. I'll have him here," Rockwell answered briskly, but with tears standing in his eyes.

Ingolby had, as it were, been stricken out of the active, sentient, companionable world into a world where he was alone, detached, solitary. His being seemed suspended in an atmosphere of misery and helplessness.

"*Blind! I am blind!*" That was the phrase which kept beating with the pulses in Ingolby's veins, that throbbed, and throbbed, and throbbed like engines in a creaking ship which the storm was shaking and pounding in the vast seas between the worlds. Here was the one incomprehensible, stupefying fact: nothing else mattered. Every plan he had ever had, every design which he had made his own by an originality that even his foes acknowledged, were passing before his brain in swift procession, shining, magnified and magnificent, and in that sudden clear-seeing of his soul, he beheld their full value, their exact concrete force and ultimate effect. Yet he knew himself detached from them, inactive, incapable, because he could not see with the eyes of the body. The great essential thing to him was that one thing he had lost. A man might be a cripple and still direct the great concerns of life and the business

of life. He might be shorn of limb and scarred of body, but with eyesight still direct the courses of great schemes, in whatever sphere of life his purposes were at work. He might be deaf to every sound and for ever dumb, but seeing enabled him still to carry forward every enterprise. In darkness, however, those things were naught, because judgment must depend on the eyes and senses of others. The report might be true or false, the deputy might deceive, and his blind chief might never know the truth unless some other spectator of his schemes should report it; and the truth could not surely be checked, save by someone, perhaps, whose life was joined to his, by one that truly loved him, whose fate was his.

His brain was afire. By one that truly loved him! Who was there that loved him? Who was there at one with him in all his deep designs, in all he had done and meant to do? Neither brother, nor sister, nor friend, nor any other. None of his blood was there who could share with him the constructive work he had set out to do. There was no friend whose fate was part of his own. There was the Boss Doctor: but Rockwell was tied to his own responsibilities, and he could not give up, of course, would not give up his life to the schemes of another. There were a dozen men whom he had helped to forge ahead by his own schemes, but their destinies were not linked with his. Only one whose life was linked with his could be trusted to be his eyes, to be the true reporter of all he did, had done, or planned to do. Only one who loved him.

But even one who loved him could not carry through his incompleted work against the assaults of his enemies, who were powerful, watchful, astute and merciless; who had a greed which set money higher than all else in the world. They were of the new order of things in the New World. The business of life was to them not a system of barter and exchange, a giving something of value to get something of value, with a margin of profit for each, and a sense of human equity behind; it was a cockpit where one man sought to get what another man had —and get it almost anyhow.

It was the work of the faro-bank man, whose sleight-of-hand deceived the man that carried the gun.

All the old humanity and good-fellowship of the trader, the man who exchanged, as it was in the olden days of the world and continued in greater or less degree till the present generation—all that was gone. It was held in contempt. It had prevailed when men were open robbers and filibusters and warriors, giving their lives, if need be to get what they wanted, making force their god. It had triumphed over the violence and robbery of the open road until the dying years of one century and the young years of a new century. Then the day of the trickster came and men laughed at the idea of fair exchange and strove to give an illusive value for a thing of real value—the remorseless sleight-of-hand which the law could not reach. The desire to get profit by honest toiling was dying down to ashes.

Against such men had Ingolby worked—the trick-

sters, the manipulators. At the basis of his schemes was organization and the economy which concentrated and conserved energy begets, together with its profit. He had been the enemy of waste, the apostle of frugality and thrift; and it was that which had enabled him, in his short career, to win the confidence of the big men behind him in Montreal, to make good every step of the way. He had worked for profit out of legitimate product and industry and enterprise, out of the elimination of waste. It was his theory (and his practice) that no bit of old iron, no bolt or screw, no scrap of paper should be thrown away; that the cinders of the engines could and should be utilized for that which they would make; and that was why there was a paper-mill and foundry on the Sagalac at Manitou. That was why and how, so far, he had beaten the tricksters.

But while his schemes flashed before his mind, as the opiate suspended him in the middle heaven between sleep and waking, the tricksters and manipulators came hurrying after him like marauders that waited for the moment when they could rush the camp in the watches of the night. His disordered imagination saw the ruin and wreck of his work, the seizure of what was his own—the place of control on his railways, the place of the Master Man who cared infinitely more to see his designs accomplished, than for the profit they would bring to himself. Yesterday he had been just at the top of the hill. The key in his fingers was turning in the lock which would make safe the securities of his life and career, when it snapped, and the world grew dark as the

black curtain fell and shut out the lighted room from the wayfarer in the gloom. Then, it was, came the opaque blackness which could be felt, and his voice calling in despair: "*Blind! I am blind!*"

He did not know that he had taken an opiate, that his friend had mercifully atrophied his rebellious nerves. These visions he was seeing were terribly true, but they somehow gave him no physical torture. It was as though one saw an operation performed upon one's body with the nerves stilled and deadened by ether. Yet he was cruelly conscious of the disaster which had come to him. For a time at least. Then his mind seemed less acute, the visions came, then without seeing them go, they went. And others came in broken patches, shreds, and dreams, phantasmagoria of the brain, and at last all were mingled and confused; but as they passed they seemed to burn his sight. How he longed for a cool bandage over his eyes, for a soft linen which would shut out the cumuli of broken hopes and designs, life's goals obliterated! He had had enough of the black procession of futile things.

His longing was not denied, for even as he roused himself from the oblivion coming on him, as though by a last effort to remember his dire misfortune, maybe his everlasting tragedy, something soothing and soft like linen dipped in dew was laid upon his forehead. A cool, delicious hand covered his eyes caressingly; a voice from spheres so far away that worlds were the echoing points of the sound, came whispering to him like a stir of wings in a singing grove. With a last effort to remain in the waking

world, he raised his head so very little, but fell gently back again with one sighing word on his lips:

"Fleda!"

It was no illusion. Fleda had come from her own night of trouble to his motherless, wifeless home, and would not be denied admittance by the nurse. It was Jim Beadle who admitted her.

"He'd be mad if he knew we wouldn't let her come," Jim had said to the nurse.

It was Fleda who had warned Ingolby of the dangers that surrounded him—the physical as well as business dangers. She came now to serve the blind victim of that Fate which she had seen hovering over him.

The renegade daughter of the Romanys, as Jethro Fawe had called her, was, for the first time, in the house of her master Gorgio.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHAIN OF THE PAST

FOR once in its career, Lebanon was absolutely united. The blow that had brought down the Master Man had also struck the town between the eyes, and there was no one—friend or foe of Ingolby—who did not regard it as an insult and a challenge. It was now known that the roughs of Manitou, led by the big river-driver, were about to start on a raid upon Lebanon and upon Ingolby at the very moment the horseshoe did its work. All night there were groups of men waiting outside Ingolby's house. They were of all classes—carters, railway workers, bartenders, lawyers, engineers, bankers, accountants, merchants, ranchmen, carpenters, insurance agents, manufacturers, millers, horse-dealers, and so on.

Some prayed for Ingolby's life, others swore viciously; and those who swore had no contempt for those who prayed, while those who prayed were tolerant of those who swore. It was a union of incongruous elements. Men who had nothing in common were one in the spirit of faction; and all were determined that the Orangeman, whose funeral was fixed for this memorable Saturday, should be carried

safely to his grave. Civic pride had almost become civic fanaticism in Lebanon. One of the men beaten by Ingolby in the recent struggle for control of the railways said to the others shivering in the grey dawn: "They were bound to get him in the back. They're dagos, the lot of 'em. Skunks are skunks, even when you skin 'em."

When, just before dawn, old Gabriel Druse issued from the house into which he had carried Ingolby the night before, they questioned him eagerly. He had been a figure apart from both Lebanon and Manitou, and they did not regard him as a dago, particularly as it was more than whispered that Ingolby "had a lien" on his daughter. In the grey light, with his long grizzled beard and iron-grey, shaggy hair, Druse looked like a mystic figure of the days when the gods moved among men like mortals. His great height, vast proportions, and silent ways gave him a place apart, and added to the superstitious feeling by which he was surrounded.

"How is he?" they asked whisperingly, as they crowded round him.

"The danger is over," was the slow, heavy reply. "He will live, but he has bad days to face."

"What was the danger?" they asked.

"Fever—maybe brain-fever," he replied.

"We'll see him through," someone said.

"Well, he cannot see himself through," rejoined the old man solemnly. The enigmatical words made them feel there was something behind.

"Why can't he see himself through?" asked Oster-

haut the universal, who had just arrived from the City Hall.

"He can't see himself through because he is blind," was the heavy answer.

There was a moment of shock, of hushed surprise, and then a voice burst forth: "Blind—they've blinded him, boys! The dagos have killed his sight. He's blind, boys!"

A profane and angry muttering ran through the crowd, who were thirsty, hungry, and weary with watching.

Osterhaut held up the horseshoe which had brought Ingolby down. "Here it is, the thing that done it. It's tied with a blue ribbon—for luck," he added ironically. "It's got his blood on it. I'm keeping it till Manitou's paid the price of it. Then I'll give it to Lebanon for keeps."

"That's the thing that did it, but where's the man behind the thing?" snarled a voice.

Again there was a moment's silence, and then Billy Kyle, the veteran stage-driver, said: "He's in the jug, but a gaol has doors, and doors 'll open with or without keys. I'm for opening the door, boys."

"What for?" asked a man who knew the answer, but who wanted the thing said.

"I spent four years in Arizona, same as Jowett," Billy Kyle answered, "and I got in the way of thinking as they do there, and acting just as quick as you think. I drove stage down in the Verde Valley. Sometimes there wasn't time to bring a prisoner all the way to a judge and jury, and people was busy,

and hadn't time to wait for the wagon; so they done what was right, and there was always a tree that would carry that kind o' fruit for the sake of humanity. It's the best way, boys."

"This isn't Arizona or any other lyncher's country," said Halliday, the lawyer, making his way to the front. "It isn't the law, and in this country it's the law that counts. It's the Gover'ment's right to attend to that drunken dago that threw the horseshoe, and we've got to let the Gover'ment do it. No lynching on my plate, thank you. If Ingolby could speak to us, you can bet your boots it s what he'd say."

"What's your opinion, boss?" asked Billy Kyle of Gabriel Druse, who had stood listening, his chin on his breast, his sombre eyes fixed on them abstractedly.

At Kyle's question his eyes lighted up with a fire that was struck from a flint in other spheres, and he answered: "It is for the ruler to take life, not the subject. If it is a man that rules, it is for him; if it is the law that rules, it is for the law. Here, it is the law. Then it is not for the subject, and it is not for you."

"If he was your son?" asked Billy Kyle.

"If he was my son, I should be the ruler, not the law," was the grim, enigmatic reply, and the old man stalked away from them towards the bridge.

"I'd bet he'd settle the dago's hash that done to his son what the Manitou dagos done to Ingolby—and settle it quick," remarked Lick Farrelly, the tinsmith.

"I bet he's been a ruler or something somewhere," remarked Billy Kyle.

"I bet I'm going home to breakfast," interposed Halliday, the lawyer. "There's a straight day's work before us, gentlemen," he added, "and we can't do anything here. Orangemen, let's hoof it."

Twenty Orangemen stepped out from the crowd. Halliday was a past master of their lodge, and they all meant what he meant. They marched away in procession—to breakfast and to a meeting of the lodge. Others straggled after, but a few waited for the appearance of the doctor. When the sun came up and Rockwell, pale and downcast, issued forth, they gathered round him, and walked with him through the town, questioning, listening, and threatening.

A few still remained behind at Ingolby's house. They were of the devoted slaves of Ingolby who would follow him to the gates of Hades and back again, or not back if need be.

The nigger barber, Berry, was one; another was the Jack-of-all-trades, Osterhaut, a kind of municipal odd-man, with the well-known red hair, the face that constantly needed shaving, the blue serge shirt with a scarf for a collar, the suit of canvas in the summer and of Irish frieze in the winter; the pair of hands which were always in his own pocket, never in anyone else's; the grey eye, doglike in its mildness, and the long nose which gave him the name of Snorty. Of the same devoted class also was Jowett, who, on a higher plane, was as wise and discerning a scout as any leader ever had.

While old Berry and Osterhaut and all the others were waiting at Ingolby's house, Jowett was scouting among the Manitou roughs for the Chief Constable of Lebanon, to find out what was forward. What he had found was not reassuring, because Manitou, conscious of being in the wrong, realized that Lebanon would try to make her understand her wrong-doing; and that was intolerable. It was clear to Jowett that, in spite of all, there would be trouble at the Orange funeral, and that the threatened strike would take place at the same time in spite of Ingolby's catastrophe. Already in the early morning revengeful spirits from Lebanon had invaded the outer portions of Manitou and had taken satisfaction out of an equal number of "Dogans," as they called the Roman Catholic labourers, one of whom was carried to the hospital with an elbow out of joint and a badly injured back.

With as much information as he needed, Jowett made his way back to Lebanon, when, at the approach to the bridge, he met Fleda hurrying with bent head and pale, distressed face in his own direction. Of all Western men none had a better appreciation of the sex that takes its toll of every traveller after his kind than Aaron Jowett. He had been a real buck in his day among those of his own class, and though the storm of his romances had become but a faint stirring of leaves which had tinges of days that are sear, he still had an eye unmatched for female beauty. The sun which makes that northern land a paradise in summer caught the gold-brown hair of Gabriel Druse's daughter, and made it glint

and shine. It coquetted with the umber of her eyes and they grew luminous as a jewel; it struck lightly across the pale russet of her cheek and made it like an apple that one's lips touch lovingly, when one calls it "too good to eat." It made an atmosphere of half-silver and half-gold with a touch of sunrise crimson for her to walk in, translating her form into melting lines of grace.

Jowett knew that Druse's daughter was on her way to the man who had looked once, looked twice, looked thrice into her eyes and had seen there his own image; and that she had done the same; and that the man, it might be, would never look into their dark depths again. He might speak once, he might speak twice, he might speak thrice, but would it ever be the same as the look that needed no words?

When he crossed Fleda Druse's pathway she stopped short. She knew that Jowett was Ingolby's true friend. She had seen him often, and he was intimately associated with that day when she had run the Carillon Rapids and had lain (for how long she never dared to think) in Ingolby's arms in the sight of all the world. First among those who crowded round her at Carillon that day were Jowett and Osterhaut, who had tried to warn her.

"You are going to him?" she said now with confidence in her eyes, and by the intimacy of the phrase (as though she could speak of Ingolby only as *him*) their own understanding was complete.

"To see how he is and then to do other things," Jowett answered.

There was silence for a moment in which they moved slowly forward, and then she said: "You were at Barbazon's last night?"

"When that Gipsy son of a dog gave him away!" he assented. "I never heard anything like the speech Ingolby made. He had them in the throat. The Gipsy would have had nothing out of it, if it hadn't been for the horseshoe. But in spite of the give-away, Ingolby was getting them where they were soft—fairly drugging them with good news. You never heard such dope. My, he was smooth! The golden, velvet truth it was, too. That's the only kind he has in stock; and they were sort of stupefied and locoed as they chewed his word-plant. Cicero must have been a saucy singer of the dictionary, and Paul the Apostle had a dope of his own you couldn't buy, but the gay gamut that Ingolby run gives them all the cold good-bye."

She held herself very still as he spoke. There was, however, a strange, lonely look in her eyes. The man lying asleep in the darkness of body and mind yonder was not really her lover, for he had said no word direct of love to her, and she knew him so little, how could she love him? Yet there was something between them which had its authority over their lives, overcoming even that maiden modesty which was in contrast to the bold, physical thing she had done in running the Carillon Rapids those centuries ago when she was young and glad—wistfully glad. So much had come since that day, she had travelled so far on the highway of Fate, that she looked back from peak to peak of happening to an

almost invisible horizon. So much had occurred and she felt so old this morning; and yet there was in her heart the undefined feeling that she must keep her radiant Spring of life for the blind Gorgio if he needed it—if he needed it. Would he need it, robbed of sight and with his life-work murdered?

She shuddered as she thought of what it meant to him. If a man is to work, he must have eyes to see. Yet what had she to do with it, after all? She had no right to go to him even as she was going. Yet had she not the right of common humanity? This Gorgio was her friend. Did not the world know that he had saved her life?

As they came to the Lebanon end of the bridge, Fleda turned to Jowett and, commenting on his description of the scene at Barbazon's, said: "He is a great man, but he trusts too much and risks too much. That was no place for him."

"Big men like him think they can do anything," Jowett replied, a little ironically, subtly trying to force a confession of her preference for Ingolby.

He succeeded. Her eye lighted with indignation. She herself might challenge him, but she would not allow another to do so.

"It is not the truth," she rejoined sharply. "He does not measure himself against the world so. He is like—like a child," she added.

"It seems to me all big men are like that," Jowett rejoined; "and he's the biggest man the West has seen. He knows about every man's business as though it was his own. I can get a margin off 'most any man in the West on a horse-trade, but I'd look

shy about doing a trade with him. You can't dope a horse so he won't know. He's on to it, sees it—sees it like as if it was in glass. Sees anything and everything, and——"

He stopped short. The Master Gorgio could no longer see, and his henchman flushed like a girl at his "break"; though, as a horse-dealer, he had in his time listened without shame to wilder, angrier reproaches than most men living.

She glanced at him, saw his confusion, forgave and understood him.

"It was not the horseshoe, it was not the Gipsy," she returned. "They did not set it going. It would not have happened but for one man."

"Yes, it's Marchand, right enough," answered Jowett, "but we'll get him yet. We'll get him with the branding-iron hot."

"That will not put things right if—" she paused, then with a great effort she added: "Does the doctor think he will get it back and that——"

She stopped suddenly in an agitation he did not care to see and he turned away his head.

"Doctor doesn't know," he answered. "There's got to be an expert. It 'll take time before he gets here, but—" he could not help but say it, seeing how great her distress was—"but it's going to come back. I've seen cases—I saw one down on the Border"—how easily he lied!—"just like his. It was blasting that done it—the shock. But the sight come back all right, and quick too—like as I've seen a paralizite get up all at once and walk as though he'd never been locoed. Why, God A'mighty don't

let men like Ingolby be done like that by reptiles same's Marchand."

"You believe in God Almighty?" she said half-wonderingly, yet with gratitude in her tone. "You understand about God?"

"I've seen too many things not to try and deal fair with Him and not try to cheat Him," he answered. "I see things lots of times that wasn't ever born on the prairie or in any house. I've seen — I've seen enough," he said abruptly, and stopped.

"What have you seen?" she asked eagerly. "Was it good or bad?"

"Both," he answered quickly. "I was stalked once—stalked I was by night and often in the open day, by some sickly loathsome thing, that even made me fight it with my hands—a thing I couldn't see. I used to fire buckshot at it, enough to kill an army, till I near went mad. I was really and truly getting loony. Then I took to prayin' to the best woman I ever knowed. I never had a mother, but she looked after me—my sister, Sara, it was. She brought me up, and then died and left me without anything to hang on to. I didn't know all I'd lost till she was gone. But I guess she knew what I thought of her; for she come back—after I'd prayed till I couldn't see. She come back into my room one night when the cursed 'haunt' was prowling round me, and as plain as I see you, I saw her. 'Be at peace,' she said, and I spoke to her, and said, 'Sara—why, Sara!' and she smiled, and went away into nothing—like a bit o' cloud in the sun."

He stopped, and was looking straight before him as though he saw a vision.

"It went?" she asked breathlessly.

"It went like that—" He made a swift, outward gesture. "It went and it never came back; and she didn't either—not ever. My idee is," he added, "that there's evil things that mebbe are the ghost-shapes of living men that want to do us harm; though, mebbe, too, they're the ghost-shapes of men that's dead, but that can't get on Over There. So they try to get back to us here; and they can make life Hell while they're stalking us."

"I am sure you are right," she said.

She was thinking of the loathsome thing which haunted her room last night. Was it the embodied second self of Jethro Fawe, doing the evil that Jethro Fawe, the visible corporeal man, wished to do? She shuddered, then bent her head and fixed her mind on Ingolby, whose house was not far away. She felt strangely, miserably alone this morning. She was in that fluttering state which follows a girl's discovery that she is a woman, and the feeling dawns that she must complete herself by joining her own life with the life of another.

She showed no agitation, but her repression gave an almost statuesque character to her face and figure. The adventurous nature of her early life had given her a power to meet shock and danger with coolness, and though the news of Ingolby's tragedy had seemed to freeze the vital forces in her, and all the world became blank for a moment, she had controlled herself and had set forth to go to him, come what might.

As she entered the street where Ingolby lived, she suddenly realized the difficulty before her. She might go to him, but by only one right could she stay and nurse him, and that right she did not possess. He would, she knew, understand her, no matter how the world babbled. Why should the world babble? What woman could have designs upon a blind man? Was not humanity alone sufficient warrant for staying by his side? Yet would *he* wish it? Suddenly her heart sank; but again she remembered their last parting, and once more she was sure he would be glad to have her with him.

It flashed upon her how different it would have been, if he and she had been Romanys, and this thing had happened over there in the far lands she knew so well. Who would have hinted at shame, if she had taken him to her father's *tan* or gone to his *tan* and tended him as a man might tend a man? Humanity would have been the only convention; there would have been no sex, no false modesty, no babble, no reproach. If it had been a man as old as the oldest or as young as Jethro Fawe it would have made no difference.

As young as Jethro Fawe! Why was it that now she could never think of the lost and abandoned Romany life without thinking also of Jethro Fawe? Why should she hate him, despise him, revolt against him, and yet feel that, as it were by invisible cords, he drew her back to that which she had forsworn, to the Past which dragged at her feet. The Romany was not dead in her; her real struggle was yet to come; and in a vague but prophetic way she realized

it. She was not yet one with the settled Western world.

As they came close to Ingolby's house she heard marching footsteps, and in the near distance she saw fourscore or more men tramping in military order.

"Who are they?" she asked of Jowett.

"Men that are going to see law and order kept in Lebanon," he answered.

CHAPTER XIV

SUCH THINGS MAY NOT BE

A FEW hours later Fleda slowly made her way homeward through the woods on the Manitou side of the Sagalac. Leaving Ingolby's house, she had seen men from the ranches and farms and mines beyond Lebanon driving or riding into the town, as though to a fair or fête-day. Word of anticipated troubles had sped through the countryside, and the innate curiosity of a race who greatly love a row brought in sensation-lovers. Some were skimming along in one-horse gigs, a small bag of oats dangling beneath like the pendulum of a great clock. Others were in double or triple seated light wagons —"democrats" they were called. Women had a bit of colour in their hats or at their throats, and the men had on clean white collars and suits of "store-clothes"—a sign of being on pleasure bent. Young men and girls on rough but serviceable mounts cantered past, laughing and joking, and their loud talking grated on the ear of the girl who had seen a Napoleon in the streets of his Moscow.

Presently there crossed her path a gruesomely ugly hearse, with glass sides and cheap imitation

ostrich plumes drawn by gorged ravens of horses with egregiously long tails, and driven by an undertaker's assistant, who, with a natural gaiety of soul, displayed an idiotic solemnity by dragging down the corners of the mouth. She turned away in loathing.

Her mind fled to a scene far away in the land of the Volga when she was a child, where she had seen buried two men, who had fought for their insulted honour till both had died of their wounds. She remembered the white and red sashes and the gay scarfs worn by the women at the burial, the jackets with great silver buttons worn by the men, and the silver-mounted pistols and bright steel knives in the garish belts. She saw again the bodies of the two gladiators, covered with crimson robes, carried shoulder-high on a soft bed of interlaced branches to the graves beneath the trees. There, covered with flowers and sprigs and evergreens, ribbons and favours, the kindly earth hid them, cloaked for their long sleep, while women wept, and men praised the dead, and went back to the open road again cheerily, as the dead would have them do.

If *he* had died—the man she had just left behind in that torpid sleep which opiates bring—his body would have been carried to his last home in just such a hideous equipage as this hearse. A shiver of revolt went through her frame, and her mind went to him as she had seen him lying between the white sheets of his bed, his hands, as they had lain upon the coverlet, compact of power and grace, knit and muscular and vital—not the hand for a violin but the hand for a sword.

As she had laid her hand upon his hot forehead and over his eyes, he had unconsciously spoken her name. That had told her more of what really was between them than she had ever known. In the presence of the catastrophe that must endanger, if not destroy the work he had done, the career he had made, he thought of her, spoke her name.

What could she do to prevent his ruin? She must do something, else she had no right to think of him.

As though her thoughts had summoned him, she came suddenly upon Felix Marchand at a point where her path resolved itself into two, one leading to Manitou, the other to her own home.

There was a malicious glint in the greenish eyes of the dissolute demagogue as he saw her. His hat made a half-circle before it found his head again.

"You pay early visits, mademoiselle," he said, his teeth showing rat-like.

"And you late ones?" she asked meaningly.

"Not so late that I can't get up early to see what's going on," he rejoined in a sour voice.

"Is it that those who beat you have to get up early?" she asked ironically.

"No one has got up earlier than me lately," he sneered.

"All the days are not begun," she remarked calmly.

"You have picked up quite an education since you left the road and the *tan*," he said with the look of one who delivers a smashing blow.

"I am not yet educated enough to know how you

get other people to commit your crimes for you," she retorted.

"Who commits my crimes for me?" His voice was sharp and even anxious.

"The man who told you I was once a Gipsy—Jethro Fawe."

Her instinct had told her this was so. But had Jethro told all? She thought not. It would need some catastrophe which threw him off his balance to make him speak to a Gorgio of the inner things of Romany life; and child-marriage was one of them.

He scoffed. "Once a Gipsy always a Gipsy. Race is race, and you can't put it off and on like—your stocking."

He was going to say chemise, but race was race, and vestiges of native French chivalry stayed the gross simile on the lips of the degenerate. Fleda's eyes, however, took on a dark and brooding look which, more than anything else, showed the Romany in her. With a murky flood of resentment rising in her veins, she strove to fight back the half-savage instincts of a bygone life. She felt as though she could willingly sentence this man to death as her father had done Jethro Fawe that very morning. Another thought, however, was working and fighting in her—that Marchand was better as a friend than an enemy; and that while Ingolby's fate was in the balance, while yet the Orange funeral had not taken place and the strikes had not yet come, it might be that he could be won over to Ingolby. Her mind was thus involuntarily reproducing Ingolby's policy, as he had declared it to Jowett and Rockwell. It

was to find Felix Marchand's price, and to buy off his enmity—not by money, for Marchand did not need that, but by those other coins of value which are individual to each man's desires, passions and needs.

"Once a Frenchman isn't always a Frenchman," she replied coolly, disregarding the coarse insolence of his last utterance. "You yourself do not now swear faith to the tricolour or the fleur-de-lis."

He flushed. She had touched a tender nerve.

"I am a Frenchman always," he rejoined angrily. "I hate the English. I spit on the English flag."

"Yes, I've heard you are an anarchist," she rejoined. "A man with no country and with a flag that belongs to no country—*quelle affaire et quelle drôlerie!*"

She laughed. Taken aback in spite of his anger, he stared at her. How good her French accent was! If she would only speak altogether in that beloved language, he could smother much malice. She was beautiful and—well, who could tell? Ingolby was wounded and blind, maybe for ever, and women are always with the top dog—that was his theory. Perhaps her apparent dislike of him was only a mood. Many women that he had conquered had been just like that. They had begun by disliking him—from Lil Sarnia down—and had ended by being his. This girl would never be his in the way that the others had been, but—who could tell?—perhaps he would think enough of her to marry her? Anyway, it was worth while making such a beauty care for him. The other kind of women were easy

enough to get, and it would be a piquant thing to have one irreproachable *affaire*. He had never had one; he was not sure that any girl or woman he had ever known had ever loved him, and he was certain that he had never loved any girl or woman. To be in love would be a new and piquant experience for him. He did not know love, but he knew what passion was. He had ever been the hunter. This trail might be dangerous, too, but he would take his chances. He had seen her dislike of him whenever they had met in the past, and he had never tried to soften her attitude towards him. He had certainly whistled, but she had not come. Well, he would whistle again—a different tune.

"You speak French much?" he asked almost eagerly, the insolence gone from his tone. "Why didn't I know that?"

"I speak French in Manitou," she replied, "but nearly all the French speak English there, and so I speak more English than French."

"Yes, that's it," he rejoined almost angrily again. "The English will not learn French, will not speak French. They make us learn English, and——"

"If you don't like the flag and the country, why don't you leave it?" she interrupted, hardening, though she had meant to try and win him over to Ingolby's side.

His eyes blazed. There was something almost real in the man after all.

"The English can kill us, they can grind us to the dust," he rejoined in French, "but we will not leave the land which has always been ours. We settled

it; our fathers gave their lives for it in a thousand places. The Indians killed them, the rivers and the storms, the plague and the fire, the sickness and the cold wiped them out. They were burned alive at the stake, they were flayed; their bones were broken to pieces by stones—but they blazed trails with their blood in the wilderness from New Orleans to Hudson's Bay. They paid for the land with their lives. Then the English came and took it, and since that time—one hundred and fifty years—we have been slaves."

"You do not look like a slave," she answered, "and you have not acted like a slave. If you were to do the things in France that you've done here, you wouldn't be free as you are to-day."

"What have I done?" he asked darkly.

"You were the cause of what happened at Barbazon's last night,"—he smiled evilly—"you are egging on the roughs to break up the Orange funeral to-day; and there is all the rest you know so well."

"What is the rest I know so well?" He looked closely at her, his long, mongrel eyes half-closing with covert scrutiny.

"Whatever it is, it is all bad and it is all yours."

"Not all," he retorted coolly. "You forget your Gipsy friend. He did his part last night, and he's still free."

They had entered the last little stretch of wood in which her home lay, and she slackened her footsteps slightly. She felt that she had been unwise in challenging him; that she ought to try persistently to win him over. It was repugnant to her, still it

must be done even yet. She mastered herself for Ingolby's sake and changed her tactics.

"As you glory in what you have done, you won't mind being responsible for all that's happened," she replied in a more friendly tone.

She made an impulsive gesture towards him.

"You have shown what power you have—isn't that enough?" she asked. "You have made the crowd shout, '*Vive Marchand!*' You can make everything as peaceful as it is now upset. If you don't do so, there will be much misery. If peace must be got by force, then the force of government will get it in the end. You have the gift of getting hold of the worst men here, and you have done it; but won't you now master them again in the other way? You have money and brains; why not use them to become a leader of those who will win at last, no matter what the game may be?"

He came close to her. She shrank inwardly, but she did not move. His greenish eyes were wide open in the fulness of eloquence and desire.

"You have a tongue like none I ever heard," he said impulsively. "You've got a mind that thinks, you've got dash and can take risks. You took risks that day on the Carillon Rapids. It was only the day before that I'd met you by the old ford of the Sagalac, and made up to you. You choked me off as though I was a wolf or a devil on the loose. The next day when I saw Ingolby hand you out to the crowd from his arms, I got nasty—I have fits like that sometimes, when I've had a little too much liquor. I felt it more because you're the only kind

of woman that could ever get a real hold on me. It was you made me get the boys rampaging and set the toughs moving. As you say, I can get hold of a crowd. It's not hard—with money and drink. You can buy human nature cheap. Every man has his price they say—and every woman too—*bien sûr!* The thing is to find out what is the price, and then how to buy. You can't buy everyone in the same way, even if you use a different price. You've got to find out how they want the price—whether it's to be handed over the counter, so to speak, or to be kept on the window-sill, or left in a pocket, or dropped in a path, or dug up like a potato, with a funny make-believe that fools nobody, but just plays to the hypocrite in everyone everywhere. I'm saying this to you because you've seen more of the world, I bet, than one in a million, even though you're so young. I don't see why we can't come together. I'm to be bought. I don't say that my price isn't high. You've got your price, too. You wouldn't fuss yourself about things here in Manitou and Lebanon, if there wasn't something you wanted to get. *Tout ça!* Well, isn't it worth while making the bargain? You've got such gift of speech that I'm just as if I'd been drugged, and all round, face, figure, eyes, hair, foot, and girdle, you're worth giving up a lot for. I've seen plenty of your sex, and I've heard crowds of them talk, but they never had anything for me beyond the minute. You've got the real thing. You're my fancy. You've been thinking and dreaming of Ingolby. He's done. He's a back number. There's nothing he's done that isn't on the

tumble since last night. The financial gang that he downed are out already against him. They'll have his economic blood. He made a splash while he was at it, but the alligator's got him. It's 'Exit Ingolby,' now."

She made a passionate gesture, and seemed about to speak, but he went on: "No, don't say anything. I know how you feel. You've had your face turned his way, and you can't look elsewhere all at once. But Time cures quick, if you're a good healthy human being. Ingolby was the kind likely to draw a girl. He's a six-footer and over; he spangled a lot, and he smiled pretty—*comme le printemps*, and was sharp enough to keep clear of women that could hurt him. That was his strongest point, after all, for a little, sly sprat of a woman that's made eyes at you and led you on, till you sent her a note in a hurry some time with some loose hot words in it, and she got what she'd wanted, will make you pay a hundred times for the goods you get. Ingolby was sharp enough to walk shy, until you came his way, and then he lost his underpinning. But last night got him in the vitals—hit him between the eyes; and his stock's not worth ten cents in the dollar to-day. But though the pumas are out, and he's done, and 'll never *see* his way out of the hole he's in"—he laughed at his grisly joke—"it's natural to let him down easy. You've looked his way; he did you a good turn at the Carillon Rapids, and you'd do one for him if you could. I'm the only one can stop the worst from happening. You want to pay your debt to him. Good. I can help you do it. I can stop

the strikes on the railways and in the mills. I can stop the row at the Orange funeral. I can stop the run on his bank and the drop in his stock. I can fight the gang that's against him—I know how. I'm the man that can bring things to pass."

He paused with a sly, mean smile of self-approval and conceit, and his tongue licked the corners of his mouth in a way that drunkards have in the early morning when the effect of last night's drinking has worn off. He spread out his hands with the air of a man who had unpacked his soul, but the chief characteristic of his manner was egregious belief in himself.

At first, in her desire to find a way to meet the needs of Ingolby, Fleda had listened to him with fortitude and even without revolt. But as he began to speak of women, and to refer to herself with a look of gloating which men of his breed cannot hide, her angry pulses beat hard. She did not quite know where he was leading, but she was sure he meant to say something which would vex her beyond bearing. At one moment she meant to cut short his narrative, but he prevented her, and when at last he ended, she was almost choking with agitation. It had been borne in upon her, as his monologue proceeded, that she would rather die than accept anything from this man—anything of any kind. To fight him was the only thing. Nothing else could prevail in the end. His was the service of the unpenitent thief.

"And what is it you want to buy from me?" she asked evenly.

He did not notice, and he could not realize that ominous thing in her voice and face. "I want to be friends with you. I want to see you here in the woods, to meet you as you met Ingolby. I want to talk with you, to hear you talk; to learn things from you I never learned before; to——"

She interrupted him with a swift gesture. "And then—after that? What do you want at the end of it all? One cannot spend one's time talking and wandering in the woods and teaching and learning. After that, what?"

"I have a house in Montreal," he said evasively. "I don't want to live there alone." He laughed. "It's big enough for two, and at the end it might be us two, if——"

With sharp anger, yet with coolness and dignity, she broke in on his words. "Might be us two!" she exclaimed. "I have never thought of making my home in a sewer. Do you think—but, no, it isn't any use talking! You don't know how to deal with man or woman. You are perverted."

"I did not mean what you mean; I meant that I should want to marry you," he protested. "You think the worst of me. Someone has poisoned your mind against me."

"Everyone has poisoned my mind against you," she returned, "and yourself most of all. I know you will try to injure Mr. Ingolby; and I know that you will try to injure me; but you will not succeed."

She turned and moved away from him quickly, taking the path towards her own front door. He

called something after her, but she did not or would not hear.

As she entered the open space in front of the house, she heard footsteps behind her and turned quickly, not without apprehension. A woman came hurrying towards her. She was pale, agitated, haggard with fatigue.

"May I speak with you?" she asked in French.

"Surely," replied Fleda.

CHAPTER XV

THE WOMAN FROM WIND RIVER

"WHAT is it?" asked Fleda, opening the door of the house.

"I want to speak to you about M'sieu'," replied the sad-faced woman. She made a motion of her head backwards towards the wood. "About M'sieu' Marchand."

Fleda's face hardened; she had had more than enough of "M'sieu' Marchand." She was bitterly ashamed that she had, even for a moment, thought of using diplomacy with him. But this woman's face was so forlorn, apart, and lonely, that the old spirit of the Open Road worked its will. In far-off days she had never seen a human being turned away from a Romany tent, or driven from a Romany camp. She opened the door and stood aside to admit the wayfarer.

A few moments later, the woman, tidied and freshened, sat at the ample breakfast which was characteristic of Romany home-life. The woman's plate was bountifully supplied by Fleda, and her cup filled more than once by Madame Bulteel, while old Gabriel Druse bulked friendly over all. His face

now showed none of the passion and sternness which had been present when he passed the Sentence of the *Patrin* upon Jethro Fawe; nothing of the gloom filling his eyes as he left Ingolby's house. The gracious, bountiful look of the patriarch, of the head of the clan, was upon him.

The husband of one wife, the father of one child, yet the Ry of Rys had still the overlooking, protective sense of one who had the care of great numbers of people. His keen eyes foresaw more of the story the woman was to tell presently than either of the women of his household. He had seen many such women as this, and had inflexibly judged between them and those who had wronged them.

"Where have you come from?" he asked, as the meal drew to a close.

"From Wind River and under Elk Mountain," the woman answered with a look of relief. Her face was of those who no longer can bear the soul's secrets.

There was silence while the breakfast things were cleared away, and the window was thrown wide to the full morning sun. It broke through the branches of pine and cedar and juniper; it made translucent the leaves of the maples; it shimmered on Fleda's brown hair as she pulled a rose from the bush at the window, and gave it to the forlorn creature in the grey "linsey-woolsey" dress and the loose blue flannel jacket, whose skin was coarsened by outdoor life, but who had something of real beauty in the intense blue of her eyes. She had been a very comely figure in her best days, for her waist was small, her bosom gently and firmly rounded, and her

hands were finer than those of most who live and work much in the open air.

"You said there was something you wished to tell me," said Fleda at last.

The woman gazed slowly round at the three, as though with puzzled appeal. There was the look of the Outlander in her face; of one who had been exiled from familiar things and places. In manner she was like a child. Her glance wandered over the faces of the two women, then her eyes met those of the Ry, and stayed there.

"I am old and I have seen many sorrows," said Gabriel Druse, divining what was in her mind. "I will try to understand."

"I have known all the bitterness of life," interposed the low, soft voice of Madame Bulteel.

"All ears are the same here," Fleda added, looking the woman in the eyes.

"I will tell everything," was the instant reply. Her fingers twined and untwined in her lap with a nervousness shown by neither face nor body. Her face was almost apathetic in its despair, but her body had an upright courage.

She sighed heavily and began.

"My name is Arabella Stone. I was married from my home over against Wind River by the Jumping Sandhills.

"My father was a lumberman. He was always captain of the gang in the woods, and captain of the river in the summer. My mother was deaf and dumb. It was very lonely at times when my father was away. I loved a boy—a good boy, and he was killed break-

ing horses. When I was twenty-one years old my mother died. It was not good for me to be alone, my father said, so he must either give up the woods and the river, or he or I must marry. Well, I saw he would not marry, for my mother's face was one a man could not forget."

The old man stirred in his seat. "I have seen such," he said in his deep voice.

"So it was I said to myself I would marry," she continued, "though I had loved the Boy that died under the hoofs of the black stallion. There weren't many girls at the Jumping Sandhills, and so there were men, now one, now another, to say things to me which did not touch my heart; but I did not laugh, because I understood that they were lonely. Yet I liked one of them more than all the others.

"So, for my father's sake, I came nearer to Dennis, and at last it seemed I could bear to look at him any time of the day or night he came to me. He was built like a pine-tree, and had a playful tongue, and also he was a ranchman like the Boy that was gone. It all came about on the day he rode in from the range the wild wicked black stallion which all range-riders had tried for years to capture. It was like a brother of the horse which had killed my Boy, only bigger. When Dennis mastered him and rode him to my door I made up my mind, and when he whispered to me over the dipper of buttermilk I gave him, I said, 'Yes.' I was proud of him. He did things that a woman likes, and said the things a woman loves to hear, though they be the same thing said over and over again."

Madame Bulteel nodded her head as though in a dream, and the Ry of Rys sat with his two great hands on the chair-arm and his chin dropped on his chest. Fleda's hands were clasped in her lap, and her big eyes never left the woman's face.

"Before a month was gone I had married him," the low, tired voice went on. "It was a gay wedding; and my father was very happy, for he thought I had got the desire of a woman's life—a home of her own. For a time all went well. Dennis was gay and careless and wilful, but he was easy to live with, too, except when he came back from the town where he sold his horses. Then he was different, because of the drink, and he was quarrelsome with me—and cruel, too.

"At last when he came home with the drink upon him, he would sleep on the floor and not beside me. This wore upon my heart. I thought that if I could only put my hand on his shoulder and whisper in his ear, he would get better of his bad feeling; but he was sulky, and he would not bear with me. Though I never loved him as I loved my Boy, still I tried to be a good wife to him, and never turned my eyes to any other man."

Suddenly she stopped as though the pain of speaking was too great. Madame Bulteel murmured something, but the only word that reached the ears of the others was the Arabic word *mafish*. Her pale face was suffused as she said it.

Two or three times the woman essayed to speak again, but could not. At last, however, she overcame her emotion and said: "So it was when M'sieu' Felix Marchand came up from the Sagalac."

The old man started and muttered harshly, but Fleda had foreseen the entrance of the dissolute Frenchman into the tale, and gave no sign of surprise.

"M'sieu' Marchand bought horses," the sad voice trailed on. "One day he bought the mining-claims Dennis had been holding till he could develop them or sell them for good money. When Dennis went to town again he brought me back a present of a belt with silver clasps; but yet again that night he slept upon the floor alone. So it went on. M. Marchand, he goes on to the mountains and comes back; and he buys more horses, and Dennis takes them to Yargo, and M. Marchand goes with him, but comes back before Dennis does. It was then M'sieu' begun to talk to me; to say things that soothe a woman when she is hurt. I knew now Dennis did not want me as when he first married me. He was that kind of man—quick to care and quicker to forget. He was weak, he could not fasten where he stood. It pleased him to be gay and friendly with me when he was sober, but there was nothing behind it—nothing, nothing at all. At last I began to cry when I thought of it, for it went on and on, and I was too much alone. I looked at myself in the glass, and I saw I was not old or lean. I sang in the trees beside the brook, and my voice was even a little better than in the days when Dennis first came to my father's house. I looked to my cooking, and I knew that it was as good as ever. I thought of my clothes, and how I did my hair, and asked myself if I was as fresh to see as when Dennis first

came to me. I could see no difference. There was a clear pool not far away under the little hills where the springs came together. I used to bathe in it every morning and dry myself in the sun; and my body was like a child's. That being so, should my own man turn his head away from me day or night? What had I done to be used so, less than two years after I had married!"

She paused and hung her head, weeping gently.

"Shame stings a woman like nothing else," Madame Bulteel said with a sigh.

"It was so with me," continued Dennis's wife. "Then at last the thought came that there was another woman. And all the time M. Marchand kept coming and going, at first when Dennis was there, and always with some good reason for coming—horses, cattle, shooting, or furs bought of the Indians. When Dennis was not there, he came at first for an hour or two, as if by chance, then for a whole day, because he said he knew I was lonely. One day, I was sitting by the pool—it was in the evening. I was crying because of the thought that followed me of another woman somewhere, who made Dennis turn from me. Then it was M'sieu' came and put a hand on my shoulder—he came so quietly that I did not hear him till he touched me. He said he knew why I cried, and it saddened his soul."

"His soul—the jackal!" growled the old man in his beard.

The woman nodded wearily and went on. "For all of ten days I had been alone, except for the cattlemen camping a mile away and an old Indian helper

who slept in his tepee within call. Loneliness makes you weak when there's something tearing at the heart. So I let M'sieu' Marchand talk to me. At last he told me that there was a woman at Yargo—that Dennis did not go there for business, but to her. Everyone knew it except me, he said. He told me to ask old Throw Hard the Indian helper, if he had spoken the truth. I was shamed, and angry and crazy, too, I think, so I went to old Throw Hard and asked him. He said he could not tell the truth, and that he would not lie to me. So I knew it was all true.

"How do I know what was in my mind? Is a woman not mad at such a time! There I was, tossed aside for a flyaway, who was for any man that would come her way. Yes, I think I was mad. The pride in me was hurt—as only a woman can understand."

She paused and looked at the two women who listened to her. Fleda's eyes were on the world beyond the window of the room."

"Surely we understand," whispered Madame Bulteel.

The woman's courage returned, and she continued: "I could not go to my father, for he was riding the river scores of miles away. I was terribly alone. It was then that M'sieu' Marchand, who had bribed the woman to draw Dennis away, begged me to go away with him. He swore I should marry him as soon as I could be free of Dennis. I scarcely knew what I said or thought; but the place I had loved was hateful to me, so I went away with him."

A sharp, pained exclamation broke from the lips of Madame Bulteel, but presently she reached out and laid a hand upon the woman's arm. "Of course you went with him," she said. "You could not stay where you were and face the return of Dennis. There was no child to keep you, and the man that tempted you said he adored you?"

The woman looked gratefully at her. "That was what he said," she answered. "He said he was tired of wandering, and that he wanted a home—and there was a big house in Montreal."

She stopped suddenly upon an angry, smothered word from Fleda's lips. A big house in Montreal! Fleda's first impulse was to break in upon the woman's story, and tell her father what had happened just now outside their own house; but she waited.

"Yes, there was a big house in Montreal?" said Fleda, her eyes now resting sadly upon the woman.

"He said it should be mine. But that did not count. To be far away from all that had been was more than all else. I was not thinking of the man, or caring for him, I was flying from my shame. I did not see then the shame to which I was going. I was a fool, and I was mad and bad also. When I waked —and it was soon—there was quick understanding between us. The big house in Montreal—that was never meant for me. He was already married."

The old man stretched heavily to his feet, leaned both hands on the table, and looked at the woman with glowering eyes, while Fleda's heart seemed to stop beating.

"Married!" growled Gabriel Druse, with a blur

of passion in his voice. He knew that Felix Marchand had followed his daughter as though he were a single man.

Fleda saw what was working in his mind. Since her father suspected, he should know all.

"He almost offered me the big house in Montreal this morning," she said evenly and coldly.

A malediction broke from the old man's lips.

"He almost thought he wanted me to marry him," Fleda added scornfully.

"And what did you say?" Druse asked.

"There could only be one thing to say. I told him I had never thought of making my home in a sewer."

A grim smile broke over the old man's face, and he sat down again.

"Because I saw him with you I wanted to warn you," the woman continued. "Yesterday, I came to warn him of his danger, and he laughed at me. From Madame Thibadeau I heard he had said he would make you sing his song. When I came to tell you, there he was with you. But when he left you I was sure there was no need to speak. Still I felt I must tell you—perhaps because you are rich and strong, and will stop him from doing more harm."

"How do you know we are rich?" asked Druse in a rough tone.

"It is what the world says," was the reply. "Is there harm in that? In any case it was right to tell you all; so that one who had herded with a woman like me should not be friends with you."

"I WAS A FOOL, AND I WAS MAD AND BAD ALSO. WHEN I WAKED—AND IT WAS SOON—THERE WAS QUICK UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN US. THE BIG HOUSE IN MONTREAL — THAT WAS NEVER MEANT FOR ME. HE WAS ALREADY MARRIED"

"I have seen worse women than you," murmured the old man.

"What danger did you come to warn M. Marchand about?" asked Fleda.

"To his life," answered the woman.

"Do you want to save his life?" asked the old man.

"Ah, is it not always so?" intervened Madame Bulteel in a low, sad voice. "To be wronged like that does not make a woman just."

"I am just," answered the woman. "He deserves to die, but I want to save the man that will kill him when they meet."

"Who will kill him?" asked Fleda.

"Dennis—he will kill Marchand if he can."

The old man leaned forward with puzzled, gloomy interest. "Why? Dennis left you for another. You say he had grown cold. Was that not what he wanted—that you should leave him?"

The woman looked at him with tearful eyes. "If I had known Dennis better, I should have waited. What he did is of the moment only. A man may fall and rise again, but it is not so with a woman. She thinks and thinks upon the scar that shows where she wounded herself; and she never forgets, and so her life becomes nothing—nothing."

No one saw that Madame Bulteel held herself rigidly, and was so white that even the sunlight was gold beside her look. Yet the strangest, saddest smile played about her lips; and presently, as the eyes of the others fastened on the woman and did not leave her, she regained her usual composure.

The woman kept looking at Gabriel Druse. "When Dennis found that I had gone, and knew why—for I left word on a sheet of paper—he went mad like me. Trailing to the south, to find M'sieu' Marchand, he had an accident, and was laid up in a shack for weeks on the Tanguishene River, and they could not move him. But at last a ranchman wrote to me, and the letter found me on the very day I left M'sieu'. When I got that letter begging me to go to the Tanguishene River, to nurse Dennis who loved me still, my heart sank. I said to myself I could not go; and Dennis and I must be apart always to the end of time. But then I thought again. He was ill, and his body was as broken as his mind. Well, since I could do his mind no good, I would try to help his body. I could do that much for him. So I went. But the letter to me had been long on the way, and when I got to the Tanguishene River he was almost well."

She paused and rocked her body to and fro for a moment as though in pain.

"He wanted me to go back to him then. He said he had never cared for the woman at Yargo, and that what he felt for me now was different from what it had ever been. When he had settled accounts we could go back to the ranch and be at peace. I knew what he meant by settling accounts, and it frightened me. That is why I am here. I came to warn the man, Marchand, for if Dennis kills him, then they will hang Dennis. *Do you not see?* This is a country of law. I saw that Dennis had the madness in his brain, and so I left him again in the

evening of the day I found him, and came here—it is a long way. Yesterday, M'sieu' Marchand laughed at me when I warned him. He said he could take care of himself. But such men as Dennis stop at nothing; there will be killing, if M'sieu' stays here."

"You will go back to Dennis?" asked Fleda gently.

"Some other woman will make him happy when he forgets me," was the cheerless, grey reply.

The old man got up and, coming over, laid a hand upon her shoulder.

"Where did you think of going from here?" he asked.

"Anywhere—I don't know," was the reply.

"Is there no work here for her?" he asked, turning to Madame Bulteel.

"Yes, plenty," was the reply.

"And room also?" he asked again.

"Was ever a tent too full, when the lost traveller stumbled into camp in the old days?" rejoined Fleda.

The woman trembled to her feet, a glad look in her eyes. "I ought to go, but I am tired and I will gladly stay," she said, and swayed against the table.

Madame Bulteel and Fleda put their arms round her, steadying her.

"This is not the way to act," said Fleda with a touch of sharp reproof. Had she not her own trouble to face?

The stricken woman drew herself up and looked

Fleda in the eyes. "I will find the right way, if I can," she said with courage.

A half-hour later, as the old man sat alone in the room where he had breakfasted, a rifle-shot rang out in the distance.

"The trouble begins," he said, as he rose and hastened into the hallway.

Another shot rang out. He caught up his wide, felt hat, reached for a great walking-stick in the corner, and left the house hurriedly.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MAYOR FILLS AN OFFICE

IT was a false alarm which had startled Gabriel Druse, but it had significance. The Orange funeral was not to take place until eleven o'clock, and it was only eight o'clock when the Ry left his home. A rifle-shot had, however, been fired across the Sagalac from the Manitou side, and it had been promptly acknowledged from Lebanon. There was a short pause, and then came another from the Lebanon side. It was merely a warning and a challenge. The only man who could have controlled the position was blind and helpless.

As Druse walked rapidly towards the bridge, he met Jowett. Jowett was one of the few men in either town for whom the Ry had regard, and the friendliness had had its origin in Jowett's knowledge of horse-flesh. This was a field in which the Ry was himself a master. He had ever been too high-placed among his own people to trade and barter horses except when, sending a score of Romanys on a hunt for wild ponies on the hills of Eastern Europe, he had afterwards sold the tamed herd to the highest bidders in some Balkan town; but he had an infallible eye for a horse.

It was a curious anomaly also that the one man in Lebanon who would not have been expected to love and pursue horse-flesh was the Reverend Reuben Tripple to whom Ingolby had given his *congé*, but who loved a horse as he loved himself.

He was indeed a greater expert in horses than in souls. One of the sights of Lebanon had been the appearance in the field of the "Reverend Tripple," who owned a great, raw-boned bay mare of lank proportions, the winner of a certain great trotting-race which had delighted the mockers.

For two years Jowett had eyed Mr. Tripple's rawbone with a piratical eye.

Though it had won only a single great race, that, in Jowett's view, was its master's fault. As the Arabs say, however, Allah is with the patient; and so it was that on the evening of the day in which Ingolby met disaster, Mr. Tripple informed Jowett that he was willing to sell his rawbone.

He was mounted on the gawky roadster when he met Gabriel Druse making for the bridge. Their greeting was as cordial as hasty. Anxious as was the Ry to learn what was going on in the towns, Jowett's mount caught his eye. It was but a little time since they had met at Ingolby's house, and they were both full of the grave events afoot, but here was a horse-deal of consequence, and the bridle-rein was loose-flung.

"Yes, I got it," said Jowett, with a chuckle, interpreting the old man's look. "I got it for good—a wonder from Wonderville. Damned queer-looking critter, but there, I guess we know what I've got.

Outside like a crinoline, inside like a pair of ankles of the Lady Jane Plantagenet. Yes, I got it, Mr. Druse, got it dead-on!"

"How?" asked the Ry, feeling the clean fetlocks with affectionate approval.

"He's off East, so he says," was the joyous reply; "sudden but sure, and I dunno why. Anyway, he's got the door-handle offered, and he's off without his camel." He stroked the neck of the bay lovingly.

"How much?"

Jowett held up his fingers. The old man lifted his eyebrows quizzically. "That—h'm! Does he preach as well as that?" he asked.

Jowett chuckled. "He knows the horse country better than the New Jerusalem, I guess; and I wasn't off my feed, nor hadn't lost my head neither. I wanted that dust-hawk, and he knew it; but I got in on him with the harness and the sulky. The bridle he got from a Mexican that come up here a year ago, and went broke and then went dead; and there being no *padre*, Tripple did the burying, and he took the bridle as his fee, I s'pose. It had twenty dollars' worth of silver on it—look at these conchs."

He trifled with the big beautiful buttons on the head-stall. "The sulky's as good as new, and so's the harness almost; and there's the nose-bag and the blankets, and a saddle and a monkey-wrench and two bottles of horse-liniment, and odds and ends. I only paid that"—and he held up his fingers again as though it was a sacred rite—"for the lot. Not

bad, I want to say. Isn't he good for all day, this one?"

The old man nodded, then turned towards the bridge. "The gun-shots—what?" he asked, setting forward at a walk which taxed the rawbone's stride.

"An invite—come to the wedding; that's all. Only it's a funeral this time, and, if something good doesn't happen, there'll be more than one funeral on the Sagalac to-morrow. I've had my try, but I dunno how it 'll come out. He's not a man of much dictionary is the Monseenoor."

"The Monseigneur Lourde? What does he say?"

"He says what we all say, that he is sorry. 'But why have the Orange funeral while things are as they are?' he says, and he asks for the red flag not to be shook in the face of the bull."

"That is not the talk of a fool, as most priests are," growled the other.

"Sure. But it wants a real wind-warbler to make them see it in Lebanon. They've got the needle. They'll pray to-day with the taste of blood in their mouths. It's gone too far. Only a miracle can keep things right. The Mayor has wired for the Mounted Police—our own battalion of militia wouldn't serve, and there'd be no use ordering them out—but the Riders can't get here in time. The train's due the very time the funeral's to start, but that train's always late, though they say the ingine-driver is an Orangeman! And the funeral will start at the time fixed, or I don't know the boys that belong to the lodge. So it's up to We, Us & Co. to see the thing through, or go bust. It don't suit me. It wouldn't

have been like this, if it hadn't been for what happened to the Chief last night. There's no holding the boys in. One thing's sure, the Gipsy that give Ingolby away has got to lie low if he hasn't got away, or there'll be one less of his tribe to eat the juicy hedgehog. Yes, sir-ee!"

To the last words of Jowett the Ry seemed to pay no attention, though his lips shut tight and a menacing look came into his eyes. They were now upon the bridge, and could see what was forward on both sides of the Sagalac. There was unusual bustle and activity in the streets and on the river-bank of both towns. It was noticeable also that though the mills were running in Manitou, there were fewer chimneys smoking, and far more men in the streets than usual. Tied up to the Manitou shore were a half-dozen cribs or rafts of timber which should be floating eastward down the Sagalac.

"If the Monseenoor can't, or don't, step in, we're bound for a shindy over a corpse," continued Jowett after a moment.

"Can the Monseigneur cast a spell over them all?" remarked the Ry ironically, for he had little faith in priests, though he had for this particular one great respect.

"He's a big man, that preelate," answered Jowett quickly and forcibly. "He kept the Crees quiet when they was going to rise. If they'd got up, there'd have been hundreds of settlers massacreed. He risked his life to do that—went right into the camp in face of levelled rifles, and sat down and begun to talk. A minute afterwards all the chiefs was squat-

ting, too. Then the tussle begun between a man with a soul and a heathen gang that eat dog, kill their old folks, their cripples and their deformed children, and runs sticks of wood through their bleeding chests, just to show that they're heathens. But he won out, this Jesueete friend o' man. That's why I'm putting my horses and my land and my pants and my shirt and the buff that's underneath on the little preelate."

Gabriel Druse's face did not indicate the same confidence. "It is not an age of miracles; the priest is not enough," he said sceptically.

By twos, by threes, by tens, men from Manitou came sauntering across the bridge into Lebanon, until a goodly number were scattered at different points through the town. They seemed to distribute themselves by a preconceived plan, and they were all *habitants*. There were no Russians, Finns, Swedes, Norwegians, or Germans among them. They were low-browed, sturdy men, dressed in red or blue serge shirts, some with sashes around their waists, some with ear-rings in their ears, some in knee-boots, and some with the heavy spiked boots of the river-driver. None appeared to carry any weapon that would shoot, yet in their belts was the sheath-knife, the invariable equipment of their class. It would have seemed more suspicious if they had not carried them. The railway-men, miners, carters, mill-hands, however, appeared to carry nothing save their strong arms and hairy hands, and some were as hairy as animals. These backwoodsmen also could,

without weapons, turn a town into a general hospital. In battle they fought not only with hands, but also with teeth and hoofs like wild stallions. Teeth tore off an ear or sliced away a nose, hands smote like hammers or gouged out eyes, and their nailed boots were weapons of as savage a kind as could be invented. They could spring and strike an opponent with one foot in the chest or in the face, and spoil the face for many a day, or for ever. It was a gift of the backwoods and the lumber-camps, practised in hours of stark monotony when the devils which haunt places of isolation devoid of family life, where men herd together like dogs in a kennel, break loose. There the man that dips his fingers "friendly-like" in the dish of his neighbour one minute wants the eye of that neighbour the next: not so much in innate or momentary hatred, as in innate savagery and the primeval sense of combat, the war which was in the blood of the first man.

The unarmed appearance of these men did not deceive the pioneer folk of Lebanon. To them the time had come when the reactionary forces of Manitou must receive a check. Even those who thought the funeral fanatical and provocative were ready to defend it.

The person who liked the whole business least was Rockwell. He was subject to the same weariness of the flesh and fatigue of the spirit as all men; yet it was expected of him that at any hour he should be at the disposal of suffering humanity—of criminal or idiotic humanity—patient, devoted, calm, nerve-strung, complete. He was the one person in the

community who was the universal necessity, and yet for whom the community had no mercy in its troubles or out of them. There were three doctors in Lebanon, but none was an institution, none had prestige save Rockwell, and he often wished that he had less prestige, since he cared nothing for popularity.

He had made his preparations for possible "accidents" in no happy mood. Fresh from the bedside of Ingolby, having had no sleep, and with many sick people on his list, he inwardly damned the foolishness of both towns. He even sharply rebuked the Mayor, who urged surgical preparations upon him, for not sending sooner to the Government for a force which could preserve order or prevent the procession.

It was while he was doing so that Jowett appeared with Gabriel Druse to interview the Mayor.

"It's like this," said Jowett. "In another hour the funeral will start. There's a lot of Manitou huskies in Lebanon now, and their feet is loaded, if their guns ain't. They're comin' by driblets, and by-and-bye, when they've all distributed themselves there'll be a marching column of them from Manitou. It's all arranged to make trouble and break the law. It's the first real organized set-to we've had between the towns, and it 'll be nasty. If the preelate doesn't dope them, there'll be pertikler hell to pay."

He then gave the story of his visit to Monseigneur Lourde, and the details of what was going forward in Manitou so far as he had learned. Also the

ubiquitous Osterhaut had not been idle, and his bulletin had just been handed to Jowett.

"There's one thing ought to be done and has got to be done," Jowett added, "if the Monseenoor don't pull it off. The leaders have to be arrested, and it had better be done by one that, in a way, don't belong to either Lebanon or Manitou."

The Mayor shook his head. "I don't see how I can authorize Marchand's arrest—not till he breaks the law, in any case."

"It's against the law to conspire to break the law," replied Jowett. "You've been making a lot of special constables. Make Mr. Gabriel Druse here a special constable, then if the law's broke, he can have a right to take a hand in."

The giant Ry had stood apart, watchful and ruminant, but he now stepped forward, as the Mayor turned to him and stretched out a hand.

"I am for peace," the old man said. "To keep the peace the law must be strong."

In spite of the gravity of the situation the Mayor smiled. "You wouldn't need much disguise to stand for the law, Mr. Druse," he remarked. "When the law is seven feet high, it stands well up."

The Ry did not smile. "Make me the head of the constables, and I will keep the peace," he said.

There was a sudden silence. The proposal had come so quietly, and it was so startling, that even the calm Rockwell was taken aback. But his eye and the eye of the Mayor met, and the look in both their faces was the same.

"That's bold play," the Mayor said, "but I

guess it goes. Yesterday it couldn't be done. To-day it can. The Chief Constable's down with small-pox. Got it from an Injun prisoner days ago. He's been bad for three days, but hung on. Now he's down, and there's no Chief. I was going to act myself, but the trouble was, if anything happened to me, there'd be no head of anything. It's better to have two strings to your bow. It's a go—it's a straight go, Mr. Druse. Seven foot of Chief Constable ought to have its weight with the rough-necks."

A look of hopefulness came into his face. This sage, huge, commanding figure would have a good moral effect on the rude elements of disorder.

"I'll have you read the Riot Act instead of doing it myself," added the Mayor. "It 'll be a good introduction for you, and as you live in Manitou, it 'll be a knock-out blow to the toughs. Sometimes one man is as good as a hundred. Come on to the Court-house with me," he continued cheerfully. "We'll fix the whole thing. All the special constables are waiting there with the regular police. An extra foot on a captain's shoulders is as good as a battery of guns."

"You're sure it's according to Hoyle?" asked Jowett quizzically.

He was so delighted that he felt he must "make the Mayor show off self," as he put it afterwards. He did not miscalculate; the Mayor rose to his challenge.

"I'm boss of this show," he said, "and I can go it alone if necessary when the town's in danger and

the law's being hustled. I've had a meeting of the Council and I've got the sailing-orders I want. I'm boss of the place, and Mr. Druse is my—" he stopped, because there was a look in the eyes of the Ry which demanded consideration—"And Mr. Druse is law-boss," he added.

The old ineradicable look of command shone in the eyes of Gabriel Druse. Leadership was written all over him. Power spoke in every motion. The square, unbowed shoulders, the heavily lined face, with the patriarchal beard, the gnarled hands, the rough-hewn limbs, the eye of bright, brooding force proclaimed authority.

Indeed in that moment there came into the face of the old Nomad the look it had not worn for many a day. The self-exiled ruler had paid a heavy price for his daughter's vow, though he had never acknowledged it to himself. His self-ordained impotency, in a camp that was never moved, within walls which never rose with the sunset and fell with the morning; where his feet trod the same roadway day after day; where no man asked for justice or sought his counsel or fell back on his protection; where he drank from the same spring and tethered his horse in the same paddock from morn to morn: all these things had eaten at his heart and bowed his spirit in spite of himself.

He was not now of the Romany world, and he was not of the Gorgio world; but here at last was the old thing come back to him in a new way, and his bones rejoiced. He would entitle his daughter to her place among the Gorgios. Perhaps also it would

be given him, in the name of the law, to deal with a man he hated.

"We've got Mister Marchand now," said Jowett softly to the old chieftain.

The Ry's eyes lighted and his jaw set. He did not speak, but his hands clenched, opened and clenched again. Jowett saw and grinned.

"The Mayor and the law-boss 'll win out, I guess," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MONSEIGNEUR AND THE NOMAD

EVEN more than Dr. Rockwell, Berry, the barber, was the most troubled man in Lebanon on the day of the Orange funeral. Berry was a good example of an unreasoning infatuation. The accident which had come to his idol, with the certain fall of his fortunes, hit him so hard, that, for the first time since he became a barber, his razor nipped the flesh of more than one who sat in his red-upholstered chair.

In his position, Berry was likely to hear whatever gossip was going. Who shall have perfect self-control with a giant bib under the chin, tipped back on a chair that cannot be regulated, with a face covered by lather, and two plantation fingers holding the nose? In these circumstances, with much diplomacy, Berry corkscrewed his way into confidence, and when he dipped a white cloth in bay-rum and *eau-de-cologne*, and laid it over the face of the victim, with the finality of a satisfied inquisitor, it was like giving the last smother to human individuality. An artist after his kind, he no sooner got what he wanted than he carefully coaxed his victim away

from thoughts of the disclosures into the vague distance of casual gossip once more.

Gradually and slowly he shepherded his patient back to the realms of self-respect and individual personality. The border-line was at the point where the fingers of his customer fluttered at a collar-button; for Berry, who realized the power that lies in making a man look ridiculous, never allowed a customer to be shaved or have his hair cut with a collar on. When his customers had corns, off came the boots also, and then Berry's triumph over the white man was complete. To call attention to an exaggerated bunion when the odorous towel lay upon the hidden features of what once was a "human," was the last act in the drama of the Unmaking of Man.

Only when the client had felt in his pocket for the price of the flaying, and laid it, with a ten-cent fee, on the ledge beneath the mirror, where all the implements of the inquisition and the restoration were assembled, did he feel manhood restored. If, however, he tried to keep a vow of silence in the chair of execution, he paid a heavy price; for Berry had his own methods of punishment. A little tighter grasp of the nose; a little rougher scrape of the razor, and some sharp, stinging liquid suddenly slapped with a cold palm on the excoriated spot, with the devilish hypocrisy of healing it; a longer smothering-period under the towel, when the corners of it were tucked behind the ears and a crease of it in the mouth —all these soon induced vocal expression again, and Berry started on his inquisition with gentle certainty. When at last he dusted the face with a little fine

flour of oatmeal, "to heal the cuticle and 'manoor' the roots,' and smelled with content the hands which had embalmed the hair in verbena-scented oil, a man left his presence feeling that he was ready for the wrath to come.

Such was Berry when he had under his razor one of Ingolby's business foes of Manitou, who had of late been in touch with Felix Marchand. Both were working for the same end, but with different intentions. Marchand worked with that inherent devilishness which sometimes takes possession of low minds; but the other worked as he would have done against his own brother, for his own business success; and it was his view that one man could only succeed by taking the place of another, as though the Age of Expansion had ceased and the Age of Smother had begun.

From this client while in a state of abject subjection, Berry, whose heart was hard that day, but whose diplomacy was impeccable, discovered a thing of moment. There was to be a procession of strikers from two factories in Manitou, who would throw down their tools or leave their machines at a certain moment. Falling into line these strikers would march across the bridge between the towns at such time as would bring them into touch with the line of the Orange funeral—two processions meeting at right angles. If neither procession gave way, the Orange funeral could be broken up, ostensibly not from religious fanaticism, but from the "unhappy accident" of two straight lines colliding. It was a juicy plot; and in a few minutes the Mayor

and Gabriel Druse knew of it from the faithful Berry.

The bell of the meeting-house began to toll as the Orangeman whose death had caused such commotion was carried to the waiting carriage where he would ride alone. Almost simultaneously with the starting of the gaudy yet sombre Orange cortège, with its yellow scarfs, glaring banners, charcoal plumes and black clothes, the labour procession approached the Manitou end of the Sagalac bridge. The strikers carried only three or four banners, but they had a band of seven pieces, with a drum and a pair of cymbals. With frequent discord, but with much spirit, the Bleaters, as these musicians were called in Lebanon, inspired the steps of the Manitou fanatics and toughs. As they came upon the bridge they were playing a gross paraphrase of *The Marseillaise*. At the head of the Orange procession was a silver-cornet band which the enterprise of Lebanon had made possible. Its leader was a ne'er-do-well young Welshman, who had been dismissed from leadership after leadership of bands in the East till at last he had drifted into Lebanon. Here, strange to say, he had never been drunk but once; and that was the night before he married the widow of a local publican, who had a nice little block of stock in one of Ingolby's railways, which yielded her seven per cent., and who knew how to handle the citizens of the City of Booze. When she married Tom Straker, her first husband, he drank on an average twenty whiskies a day. She got him

down to one; and then he died and had as fine a funeral as a judge. There were those who said that if Tom's whiskies hadn't been cut down so—but there it was: Tom was in the bosom of Abraham, and William Jones, who was never called anything else than Willy Welsh, had been cut down from his unrecorded bibulations to none at all; but he smoked twenty-cent cigars at the ex-widow's expense.

To-day Willy Welsh played with heart and courage, "*I'm Going Home to Glory*," at the head of the Orange procession; for who that has faced such a widow as was his for one whole year could fear the onset of faction-fighters! Besides, as the natives of the South Seas will never eat a Chinaman, so a Western man will never kill a musician. Senators, magistrates, sheriffs, police, gamblers, horse-stealers, bankers, and broncho-riders all die unnatural deaths at times, but a musician in the West is immune from all except the hand of Fate. Not one can be spared. Even a tough convicted of cheating at cards, or breaking a boom on a river, has escaped punishment because he played the concertina.

The discord and jangle between the two bands was the first collision of this fateful day. While yet there was a space between the two processions, the bands broke into furious contest. It was then that, through the long funeral line, men with hard-set faces came closer up together, and forty, detaching themselves from the well-kept run of marching lodgemen, closed up around the horses and the hearse, making a solid flanking force. At stated intervals also, outside the lodgemen in the lines,

were special constables, many of whom had been the stage-drivers, hunters, cattlemen, prospectors, and pioneers of the early days. Most of them had come of good religious stock—Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians; and though they had little piety, and had never been able to regain the religious customs and habits of their childhood, they "Stood for the Thing the Old Folks stand for." They were in a mood which would tear cotton, as the saying was. There was not one of them but expected that broken heads and bloodshed would be the order of the day, and they were stonily, fearlessly prepared for the worst.

Since the appearance of Gabriel Druse on the scene, the feeling had grown that the luck would be with them. When he started at the head of the cortège, they could scarce forbear to cheer. Such a champion in appearance had never been seen in the West, and, the night before, he had proved his right to the title by shaking a knot of toughs into spots of disconcerted humanity.

As they approached the crossroads of the bridge, his voice, clear and sonorous, could be heard commanding the Orange band to cease playing.

When the head of the funeral procession was opposite the bridge—the band, the hearse, the bodyguard of the hearse—Gabriel Druse stood aside, and took his place at the point where the lines of the two processions would intersect.

It was at this moment that the collision came. There were only about sixty feet of space between the two processions, when a voice rang out in a chal-

lenge so offensive, that the men of Manitou got their cue for attack without creating it themselves. Every Orangeman of the Lodge of Lebanon afterwards denied that he had raised the cry; and the chances are that every one spoke the truth. It was like Felix Marchand to arrange for just such an episode and so throw the burden of responsibility on the Orangemen.

"To hell with the Pope! To hell with the Pope!" the voice rang out, and it had hardly ceased before the Manitou procession made a rush forward. The apparent leader of the Manitou roughs was a black-bearded man of middle height, who spoke raucously to the crowd behind him.

Suddenly a powerful voice rang out.

"*Halt, in the name of the Queen!*" it called.

Surprise is the very essence of successful war. The roughs of Manitou had not looked for this. They had foreseen the appearance of the official Chief Constable of Lebanon; they had expected his challenge and warning in the vernacular; but here was something which struck them with consternation—first, the giant of Manitou in the post of command, looking like some berserker; and then the formal reading of that stately document in the name of the Queen.

Far back in the minds of every French *habitant* present was the old monarchical sense. He makes, at worst, a poor anarchist, though he is a good revolutionist; and the French colonials had never been divorced from monarchical France.

In the eyes of the most forward of those on the

Sagalac bridge, there was a sudden wonderment and confusion. To the dramatic French mind, ceremonial is ever welcome; and for a moment it had them in its grip, as old Gabriel Druse read out in his ringing voice, the trenchant royal summons.

It was a strange and dramatic scene—the Orange funeral standing still, garish yet solemn, with hundreds of men, rough and coarse, quiet and refined, dissolute and careless, sober and puritanic, broad and tolerant, sharp and fanatical; the labour procession, polyglot in appearance, but with Gallic features and looseness of dress predominating; excitable, brutish, generous, cruel; without intellect, but with an intelligence which in the lowest was acute, and with temperaments responsive to drama.

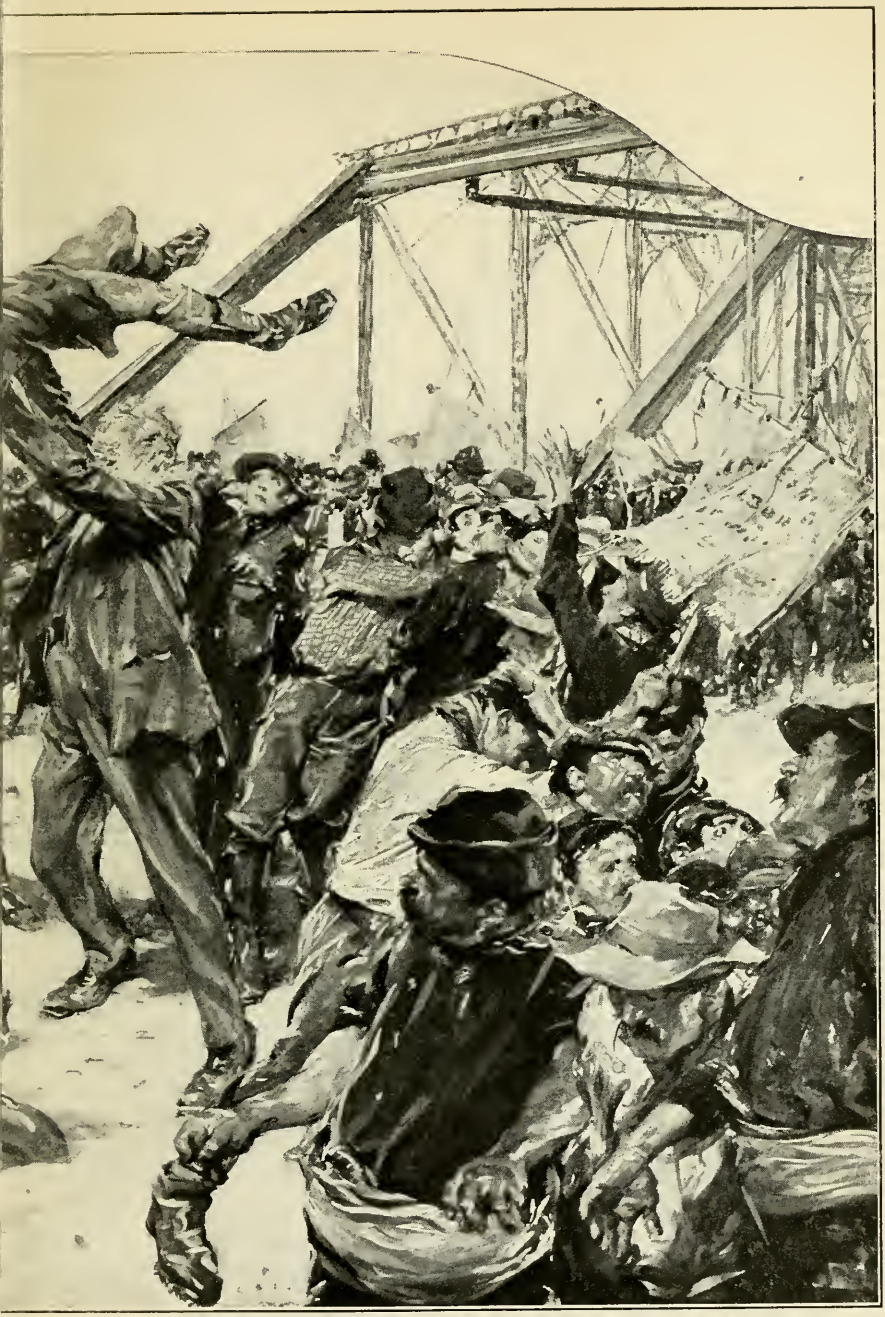
As Druse read, his eyes now and then flashed, at first he knew not why, to the slim, bearded figure of the apparent leader. At length he caught the feverish eye of the man, and held it for a moment. It was familiar, but it eluded him; he could not place it. He heard, however, Jowett's voice say to him, scarce above a whisper:

"It's Felix Marchand, boss!"

Jowett also had been puzzled at first by the bearded figure, but it suddenly flashed upon him that the beard and wig were a disguise, that Marchand had resorted to Ingolby's device. It might prove as dangerous a stratagem with him as it had to Ingolby.

There was a moment's hesitation after Druse had finished reading—as though the men of Manitou

SO EXTRAORDINARY WAS THE SIGHT THAT, AS IF FASCINATED, THE C
AND TENSE BODIES



WD BEFORE AND BEHIND FOLLOWED THE ACTION WITH STARING EYES

had not quite recovered from their surprise—then the man with the black beard said something to those nearest him. There was a start forward, and someone cried, "Down with the Orangemen—*à bas l'Orange!*"

Like a well-disciplined battalion the Orangemen rolled up quickly into a compact mass, showing that they had planned their defence well, and the moment was black with danger, when, suddenly, Druse strode forward. Flinging right and left two or three river-drivers, he caught the man with the black beard, snatched him out from among the oncoming crowd, and tore off the black beard and wig. Felix Marchand stood exposed.

A cry of fury rang out from the Orangemen behind, and a dozen men rushed forward, but Gabriel Druse acted with the instant decision of a real commander. Seeing that it would be a mistake to arrest Marchand at that moment, he raised the struggling figure of the wrecker above his head and, with Herculean effort, threw him up over the heads of the Frenchmen in front of him.

So extraordinary was the sight that, as if fascinated, the crowd before and behind followed the action with staring eyes and tense bodies. The faces of all the contending forces were as concentrated for the instant, as though the sun were falling out of the sky. It was so great a feat, one so much in consonance with the spirit of the frontier world, that gasps of praise broke from both crowds. As though it were a thunderbolt, the Manitou roughs standing where Marchand was like to fall,

instead of trying to catch him, broke away from beneath the bundle of falling humanity, and Marchand fell on the dusty cement of the bridge with a dull thud, like a bag of bones.

For a moment there was no motion on the part of either procession. Banners drooped and swayed as the men holding them were lost in the excitement.

Time had only been gained, however. There was no reason to think that the trouble was over, or that the special constables who had gathered close behind Gabriel Druse would not have to strike heavy blows for the cause of peace.

The sudden appearance of a new figure in the narrow, open space between the factions in that momentary paralysis was not a coincidence. It was what Jowett had planned for the factor for peace in which he most believed.

A small, spare man in a scarlet cassock, white chasuble, and black biretta, suddenly stole out from the crowd on the Lebanon side of the bridge, carrying the elements of the Mass. His face was shining white, and in the eyes was an almost unearthly fire. It was the beloved Monseigneur Lourde.

Raising the elements before him towards his own people on the bridge, he cried in a high, searching voice:

"I prayed with you, I begged you to preserve the peace. Last night I asked you in God's name to give up your disorderly purposes. I thought then I had done my whole duty; but the voice of God has spoken to me. An hour ago I carried the elements to a dying woman here in Lebanon, and gave

her peace. As I did so the funeral bell rang out, and it came to me, as though the One above had spoken, that peace would be slain and His name insulted by all of you—by all of you, Catholic and Protestant. God's voice bade me come to you from the bed of one who has gone hence from peace to Peace. In the name of Christ, peace, I say! Peace, in the name of Christ!"

He raised the sacred vessel high above his head, so that his eyes looked through the walls of his uplifted arms. "Kneel!" he called in a clear, ringing voice which yet quavered with age.

There was an instant's hush, and then great numbers of the crowd in front of him, toughs and wreckers, blasphemers, turbulent ones and evil-livers, yet Catholics all, with the ancient root of the Great Thing in them, sank down; and the banners of the labour societies drooped before the symbol of peace won by sacrifice.

Even the Orangemen bared their heads in the presence of that Popery which was anathema to them, which they existed to combat, and had been taught to hate. Some, no doubt, would rather have fought than have had peace at the price; but they could not free their minds from the sacred force which had brought most of the crowd of faction-fighters to their knees.

With a wave of the hand, Gabriel Druse ordered the cortège forward, and silently the procession with its yellow banners and its sable, drooping plumes moved on.

Once on its way again, Willy Welsh and his silver-

cornet band struck up the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light."

It was the one real coincidence of the day that this moving hymn was written by a cardinal of the Catholic Church. It was also an irony that, as the crowd of sullen Frenchmen turned back to Manitou, the train bearing the Mounted Police, for whom the Mayor had sent to the capital, steamed noisily in, and redcoats showed at its windows and on the steps of the cars.

The only casualty that the day saw was the broken arm and badly bruised body of Felix Marchand, who was gloomily helped back to his home across the Sagalac.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEACONS

THERE were few lights showing in Lebanon or Manitou; but here and there along the Sagalac was the fading glimmer of a camp-fire, and in Tekewani's reservation one light glowed softly like a star. It came from a finely-made and chased safety-lantern given to Tekewani by the Government, as a symbol of honour for having kept the braves quiet when an Indian and half-breed rising was threatened; and to the powerless chief it had became a token of his authority, the sign of the Great White Mother's approval. By day a spray of eagle's feathers waved over his tepee, but the gleam of the brass lantern every night was like a sentry at the doorway of a monarch.

It was a solace to his wounded spirit; it allayed the smart of subjection; made him feel himself a ruler in retirement, even as Gabriel Druse was a self-ordained exile.

These two men, representing the primitive nomad life, had been drawn together in friendship. So much so, that to Tekewani alone of all the West, Druse gave his confidence and told his story. It

came in the Springtime, when the blood of the young bucks was simmering and the ancient spell was working. There had preceded them generations of hunters who had slain their thousands and their tens of thousands of wild animals and the fowls of the air; had killed their enemies in battle; had seized the comely women of their foes and made them their own. No thrill of the hunter's trail now drew off the overflow of desire. In the days of rising sap, there were only the young maidens or wives of their own tribe to pursue, and it lacked in glory. Also in the Springtime, Tekewani himself had his own trials, for in his blood the old medicine stirred. His face turned towards the prairie North and the mountain West where yet remained the hunter's quarry; and he longed to be away with rifle and gun, with his squaw and the papooses trailing after like camp-followers, to eat the fruits of victory. But that could not be; he must remain in the place the Great White Mother had reserved for him; he and his braves must assemble, and draw their rations at the appointed times and seasons, and grunt thanks to those who ruled over them.

It was on one of these virginal days, when there was a restless stirring among the young bucks, who smelled the wide waters, the pines and the wild shrubs; who heard the cry of the loon on the lonely lake and the whir of the wild duck's wings, who answered to the phantom cry of ancient war; it was on such a day that the two chiefs opened their hearts to each other.

Near to the boscage on a little hill overlooking the

great river, Gabriel Druse had come upon Tekewani seated in the pine-dust, rocking to and fro, and chanting a low, sorrowful refrain, with eyes fixed on the setting sun. And the Ry of Rys understood, with the understanding which only those have who live close to the earth, and also near to the heavens of their own gods. He sat down beside the forlorn chief, and in the silence their souls spoke to each other. There swept into the veins of the Romany ruler something of the immitigable sadness of the Indian chief; and, with a sudden premonition that he also was come to the sunset of his life, his big nomad eyes sought the westering rim of the heavens, and his breast heaved.

In that hour the two men declared themselves to each other, and Gabriel Druse told Tekewani all that he had hidden from the people of the Sagalac, and was answered in kind. It seemed to them that they were as brothers who were one and who had parted in ages long gone; and having met were to part and disappear once more, beginning still another trail in an endless reincarnation.

"Brother," said Tekewani, "it was while there was a bridge of land between the continents at the North that we met. Again I see it. I forgot it, but again I see. There was war, and you went upon one path and I upon another, and we met no more under all the moons till now."

"*Dordi*, so it was and at such a time," answered the Ry of Rys. "And once more we will follow after the fire-flies which give no light to the safe places but only lead farther into the night."

Tekewani rocked to and fro again, muttering to himself, but presently he said:

"We eat from the hands of those who have driven away the buffalo, the deer, and the beaver; and the young bucks do naught to earn the joy of women. They are but as lusting sheep, not as the wild-goat that chases its mate over the places of death, till it comes upon her at last, and calls in triumph over her as she kneels at his feet. So it is. Like tame beasts we eat from the hand of the white man, and the white man leaves his own camp where his own women are, and prowls in our camps, so that not even our own women are left to us."

It was then that Gabriel Druse learned of the hatred of Tekewani for Felix Marchand, because of what he had done in the reservation, prowling at night like a fox or a coyote in the folds.

They parted that hour, believing that the epoch of life in which they were and the fortunes of time which had been or were to come, were but turns of a wheel that still went on turning; and that whatever chanced of good or bad fortune in the one span of being, might be repaired in the next span, or the next, or the next; so, through their creed of reincarnation, taking courage to face the failure of the life they now lived. Not by logic or the teaching of any school had they reached this revelation, but through an inner sense. They were not hopeful and wondering and timid; they were only sure. Their philosophy, their religion, whether heathen or human, was inborn. They had comfort in it and in each other.

After that day Gabriel Druse always set a light in his window which burned all night, answering to the lantern-light at the door of Tekewani's home—the lights of exile and of an alliance which had behind it the secret influences of past ages and vanished peoples.

There came a night, however, when the light at the door of Tekewani's tepee did not burn. At sunset it was lighted, but long before midnight it was extinguished. Looking out from the doorway of his home, (it was the night after the Orange funeral), Gabriel Druse, returned from his new duties at Lebanon, saw no light in the Indian reservation. With anxiety, he set forth in the shine of the moon to visit it.

Arrived at the chief's tepee, he saw that the lantern of honour was gone, and waking Tekewani, he brought him out to see. When the old Indian knew his loss, he gave a harsh cry and stooped, and, gathering a handful of dust from the ground, sprinkled it on his head. Then with arms outstretched he cursed the thief who had robbed him of what had been to him like a never-fading mirage, an illusion blinding his eyes to the bitter facts of his condition.

To his mind all the troubles come to Lebanon and Manitou had had one source; and now the malign spirit had stretched its hand to spoil those already dispossessed of all but the right to live. One name was upon the lips of both men, as they stood in the moonlight by Tekewani's tepee.

"There shall be an end of this," growled the Romany.

"I will have my own," said Tekewani, with malediction on the thief who had so shamed him.

Black anger was in the heart of Gabriel Druse as he turned again towards his own home, and he was glad of what he had done to Felix Marchand at the Orange funeral.

CHAPTER XIX

THE KEEPER OF THE BRIDGE

"Like the darkness of the grave, which is darkness itself——"

MOST of those who break out of the zareba of life, who lay violent hands upon themselves, do so with a complete reasoning, which in itself is proof of their insanity. It may be domestic tragedy, or ill-health, or crime, or broken faith, or shame, or insomnia, or betrayed trust—whatever it is, many a one who suffers from such things, tries to end it all with that deliberation, that strategy, and that cunning which belong only to the abnormal.

A mind which has known a score or more of sleepless nights acquires an invincible clearness of its own, seeing an end which is without peradventure. It finds a hundred perfect reasons for not going on, every one of which is in itself sufficient; every one of which knits into the other ninety and nine with inevitable affinity.

To the mind of Ingolby came a hundred such reasons for breaking out of life's enclosure, as the effect of the opiate Rockwell had given him wore off, and he regained consciousness. As he did so, someone in the room was telling of that intervention of

Gabriel Druse and the Monseigneur at the Orange funeral, which had saved the situation. At first he listened to what was said—it was the nurse talking to Jim Beadle—with no sharp perception of the significance of the story; though it slowly pierced the lethargy of his senses, and he turned over in the bed to face the watchers.

"What time is it, Jim?" he asked heavily.

They told him it was sunset.

"Is it quiet in both towns?" he asked after a pause.

They told him that it was.

"Any telegrams for me?" he asked.

There was an instant's hesitation. They had had no instructions on this point, and they hardly knew what to say; but Jim's mind had its own logic, and the truth seemed best to him now. He answered that there were several wires, but that they "didn't amount to nothin'."

"Have they been opened?" Ingolby asked with a frown, half-raising himself. It was hard to resign the old masterfulness and self-will.

"I'd like to see anybody open 'em 'thout my pe'mission," answered Jim imperiously. "When you's asleep, Chief, I'm awake; and I take care of you' things, same as ever I done. There ain't no wires been opened, and there ain't goin' to be whiles I'm runnin' the show for you."

"Open and read them to me," commanded Ingolby. Again Ingolby was conscious of hesitation on Jim's part. Already the acuteness of the blind was possessing him, sharpening the senses left unimpaired.

Although Jim moved, presumably, towards the place where the telegrams lay, Ingolby realized that his own authority was being crossed by that of the doctor and the nurse.

"You will leave the room for a moment, nurse," he said with a brassy vibration in the voice—a sign of nervous strain. With a smothered protest the nurse left, and Jim stood beside the bed with the telegrams.

"Read them to me, Jim," Ingolby repeated irritably. "Be quick."

They were not wires which Ingolby should have heard at the time, when his wound was still inflamed, when he was still on the outer circle of that artificial sleep which the opiates had secured. They were from Montreal and New York, and, resolved from their half-hidden suggestion into bare elements, they meant that henceforth others would do the work he had done. They meant, in effect, that save for the few scores of thousand dollars he had made, he was now where he was when he came West.

When Jim had finished reading them, Ingolby sank back on the pillows and said quietly:

"All right, Jim. Put them in the drawer of the table and I'll answer them to-morrow. I want to get a little more sleep, so give me a drink, and then leave me alone—both nurse and you—till I ring the bell. There's a bell on the table, isn't there?"

He stretched out a hand towards the table beside the bed, and Jim softly pushed the bell under his fingers.

"That's right," he added. "Now, I'm not to be

disturbed unless the doctor comes. I'm all right, and I want to be alone and quiet. No one at all in the room is what I want. You understand, Jim?"

"My head's just as good to get at what you want as ever it was, and you' goin' have what you want, I guess, while I'm on deck," was Jim's reply.

Jim put a glass of water into his hand. He drank very slowly, was indeed only mechanically conscious that he was drinking, for his mind was far away.

After he had put the glass down, Jim still stood beside the bed, looking at him.

"Why don't you go, as I tell you, Jim?" Ingolby asked wearily.

"I'm goin'"—Jim tucked the bedclothes in carefully—"I'm goin', but, boss, I jes' want to say dat dis thing goin' to come out all right bime-by. There ain't no doubt 'bout dat. You goin' see everything, come jes' like what you want—suh!"

Ingolby did not reply. He held out his hand, and black fingers shot over and took it. A moment later the blind man was alone in the room.

The light of day vanished, and the stars came out. There was no moon, but it was one of those nights of the West when millions of stars glimmer in the blue vault above, and every planet and every star and cluster of stars are so near that it might almost seem they could be caught by an expert human hand. The air was very still, and a mantle of peace was spread over the tender scene. The window and the glass doors that gave from Ingolby's room upon the veranda on the south side of the house, were open, and the air was warm as in Midsummer. Now and then

the note of a night-bird broke the stillness, but nothing more.

It was such a night as Ingolby loved; it was such a night as often found him out in the restful gloom of the trees, thinking and brooding, planning, revelling in memories of books he had read, and in dreaming of books he might write—if there were time. Such a night insulated the dark moods which possessed him occasionally almost as effectively as fishing did; and that was saying much.

But the darkest mood of all his days was upon him now. When Rockwell came, soon after Jim and the nurse left him, he simulated sleep, for he had no mind to talk; and the doctor, deceived by his even breathing, had left, contented. At last he was wholly alone with his own thoughts, as he desired. From the moment Jim had read him the wires, which were the real revelation of the situation to which he had come, he had been travelling hard on the road leading to a *cul-de-sac*, from which there was no egress save by breaking through the wall. Never, it might have seemed, had his mind been clearer, but it was a clearness belonging to the abnormal. It was a straight line of thought which, in its intensity, gathered all other thoughts into its wake, reduced them to the control of an obsession. It was borne in on his mind that his day was done, that nothing could right the disorder which had strewn his path with broken hopes and shattered ambitions. No life-work left, no schemes to accomplish, no construction to achieve, no wealth to gain, no public good to be won, no home to be his, no woman, his

very own, to be his counsellor and guide in the natural way!

As myriad thoughts drove through his brain on this Indian-summer night, they all merged into the one obsession that he could no longer stay. The irresistible logic of the brain stretched to an abnormal tenuity, and an intolerable brightness was with him. He was in the throes of that intense visualization which comes with insomnia, when one is awake yet apart from the waking world, where nothing is really real and nothing normal. He had a call to go hence, and he must go. Minute after minute passed, hours passed, and the fight of the soul to maintain itself against the disordered mind went on. All his past seemed but part of a desert, lonely and barren and strange.

In the previous year he had made a journey to Arizona with Jowett, to see some railway construction there, and at a ranch he had visited he came upon some verses which had haunted his mind ever since. They fastened upon his senses now. They were like a lonesome monotone which at length gave calm to his torturing reflections. In his darkness the verses kept repeating themselves:

"I heard the desert calling, and my heart stood still—
There was Winter in my world and in my heart:
A breath came from the mesa and a message stirred my will,
And my soul and I arose up to depart.

I heard the desert calling; and I knew that over there,
In an olive-sheltered garden where the mesquite grows,
Was a woman of the sunrise, with the starshine in her hair,
And a beauty that the almond-blossom blows.

In the night-time when the ghost-trees glimmered in the moon,
Where the mesa by the watercourse was spanned,
Her loveliness enwrapped me like the blessedness of June,
And all my life was thrilling in her hand.

I hear the desert calling, and my heart stands still;
There is Summer in my world and in my heart;
A breath comes from the mesa, and a will beyond my will
Binds my footsteps as I rise up to depart."

This strange, half-mystic song of the mesa and the olive-groves, of the ghost-trees and the moon, kept playing upon his own heated senses like the spray from a cooling stream, and at last it quieted him. The dark spirit of self-destruction loosened its hold.

His brain had been strained beyond the normal; almost unconsciously his fingers had fastened on the pistol in the drawer of the table by his bed. It had been there since the day when he had travelled down from Alaska—loaded as it had been when he had carried it down the southern trail. But as his fingers tightened on the little engine of death, from the words which had been ringing in his brain came the flash of a revelation:

". . . . . And a will beyond my will
Binds my footsteps as I rise up to depart."

A will beyond his will! It was as though Fleda's fingers were laid upon his own; as though she whispered in his ear and her breath swept his cheek; as though she was there in the room beside him, making the darkness light, tempering the wind of chastisement to his naked soul. In the over-

strain of his nervous system the illusion was powerful. He thought he heard her voice. The pistol slipped from his fingers, and he fell back on the pillow with a sigh. The will beyond his will bound his footsteps.

Who can tell? The grim, malign experience of Fleda in her bedroom with the Thing she thought was from beyond the bounds of her own life; the voice that spoke to Ingolby, and the breath that swept over his cheek were, perhaps, as real in a sense as would have been the corporeal presence of Jethro Fawe in one case and of Fleda Druse in the other. It may be that in very truth Fleda Druse's spirit with its poignant solicitude controlled his will as he "rose up to depart." But if it was only an illusion, it was not less a miracle. Some power of suggestion bound his fleeing footsteps, drew him back from the Brink.

He slept. Once the nurse came and looked at him and returned to the other room; and twice Jim stole in silently for a moment and retired again to his own chamber. The stars shone in at the doors that opened out from the quiet room into the night, the watch beside the bed ticked on, the fox-terrier which always slept on a mat at the foot of the bed sighed in content, while his master breathed heavily in a sleep full of dreams that hurried past like phantasmagoria —of a hundred things that had been in his life, and that had never been; of people he had known, distorted, ridiculous and tremendous. There were dreams of fiddlers and barbers, of crowds writhing in passion in a room where there was a billiard-

table and a lucky horseshoe on the wall. There were dreams that tossed and mingled in one whirlpool vision; and then at last came a dream which was so cruel and clear that it froze his senses.

It was the dream of a great bridge over a swift-flowing river; of his own bridge over the Sagalac—of that bridge being destroyed by men who crept through the night with dynamite in their hands.

With a hoarse, smothered cry he awoke. His eyes opened wide. His heart was beating like a hammer against his side. Only the terrier at his feet heard the muttered agony. With an instinct all its own, it slipped to the floor.

It watched its master get out of bed, cross the room and feel for a coat along the wall—an overcoat which he used as a dressing-gown at times. Putting it on hastily, with outstretched hands Ingolby felt his way to the glass doors opening on the veranda. The dog, as though to let him know he was there, rubbed against his legs. Ingolby murmured a soft, unintelligible word, and, in his bare feet, passed out on to the veranda, and from there to the garden and towards the gate at the front of the house.

The nurse heard the gate click lightly, but she was only half-awake, and as all was quiet in the next room, she composed herself in her chair again with the vain idea that she was not sleeping. And Jim the faithful one, as though under a narcotic of fate, was snoring softly beside the vacant room. The streets were still. No lights burned anywhere so far as eye could see. But now and then, in the stillness through which the river flowed on, murmuring

and rhythmic, there rose the distant sounds of disorderly voices. Ingolby was in a state which was neither sleep nor waking, which was in part delirium, in part oblivion to all things in the world save one—an obsession so complete, that he moved automatically through the street in which he lived towards that which led to the bridge.

His terrier, as though realizing exactly what he wished, seemed to guide him by rubbing against his legs, and even pressing hard against them when he was in any danger of losing the middle of the road, or swerving towards a ditch or some obstruction. Only once did they pass any human being, and that was when they came upon a camp of road-builders, where a red light burned, and two men slept in the open by a dying fire. One of them raised his head when Ingolby passed, but being more than half-asleep, and seeing only a man and a dog, thought nothing of it, and dropped back again upon his rough pillow. He was a stranger to Lebanon, and there was little chance of his recognizing Ingolby in the semi-darkness.

As they neared the river, Ingolby became deeply agitated. He moved with his hands outstretched. Had it not been for his dog he would probably have walked into the Sagalac; for though he seemed to have an instinct that was extra-natural, he swayed and staggered in the delirium driving him on. There was one dreadful moment when, having swerved from the road leading on to the bridge, he was within a foot of the river-bank. One step farther, and he would have plunged down thirty

feet into the stream, to be swept to the Rapids below.

But for the first time the terrier made a sound. He gave a whining bark almost human in its meaning, and threw himself at the legs of his master, pushing him backwards and over towards the road leading upon the bridge, as a collie guides sheep. Presently Ingolby felt the floor of the bridge under his feet; and now he hastened on, with outstretched arms and head bent forward, listening intently, the dog trotting beside, with what knowledge working in him Heaven alone knew.

The roar of the Rapids below was a sonorous accompaniment to Ingolby's wild thoughts. One thing only he felt, one thing only heard—the men in Barbazon's Tavern saying that the bridge should be blown up on the Saturday night; and this was Saturday night—the night of the day following that of the Orange funeral. He had heard the criminal hireling of Felix Marchand say that it should be done at midnight, and that the explosive should be laid under that part of the bridge which joined the Manitou bank of the Sagalac. As though in very truth he saw with his eyes, he stopped short not far from the point where the bridge joined the land, and stood still, listening.

For several minutes he was motionless, intent as an animal waiting for its foe. At last his newly-sensitive ears heard footsteps approaching and low voices. The footsteps came nearer, the voices, though so low, became more distinct. They were now not fifty feet away, but to the delirious Ingolby

they were as near as death had been when his fingers closed on the pistol in his room.

He took a step forward, and with passionate voice and arms outstretched, he cried:

"You shall not do it—by God, you shall not touch my bridge! I built it. You shall not touch it. Back, you devils—back!" The terrier barked loudly.

The two men in the semi-darkness in front of him cowered at the sight of this weird figure holding the bridge they had come to destroy. His words, uttered in so strange and unnatural a voice, shook their nerves. They shrank away from the ghostly form with the outstretched arms.

In the minute's pause following on his words, a giant figure suddenly appeared behind the dynamiters. It was the temporary Chief Constable of Lebanon, returning from his visit to Tekewani. He had heard Ingolby's wild words, and he realized the situation.

"Ingolby—steady there, Ingolby!" he called. "Steady! Steady! Gabriel Druse is here. It's all right."

At the first sound of Druse's voice the two wreckers turned and ran.

As they did so, Ingolby's hands fell to his side, and he staggered forward.

"Druse—Fleda," he murmured, then swayed, trembled and fell.

With words that stuck in his throat Gabriel Druse stooped and lifted him up in his arms. At first he turned towards the bridge, as though to cross over to Lebanon, but the last word Ingolby had uttered rang

in his ears, and he carried him away into the trees towards his own house, the faithful terrier following.

"Druse—Fleda!" They were the words of one who had suddenly emerged from the obsession of delirium into sanity, and then had fallen into as sudden unconsciousness.

"Fleda! Fleda!" called Gabriel Druse outside the door of his house a quarter of an hour later, and her voice in reply was that of one who knew that the feet of Fate were at her threshold.

BOOK III

CHAPTER XX

TWO LIFE PIECES

"IT'S a fine day."

"Yes, it's beautiful."

Fleda wanted to ask how he knew, but hesitated from feelings of delicacy. Ingolby seemed to understand. A faint reflection of the old whimsical smile touched his lips, and his hands swept over the coverlet as though smoothing out a wrinkled map.

"The blind man gets new senses," he said dreamily. "I feel things where I used to see them. How did I know it was a fine day? Simple enough. When the door opened there was only the lightest breath of wind, and the air was fresh and crisp, and I could smell the sun. One sense less, more degree of power to the other senses. The sun warms the air, gives it a flavour, and between it and the light frost, which showed that it was dry outside, I got the smell of a fine Fall day. Also, I heard the cry of the wild fowl going South, and they wouldn't have made a sound if it hadn't been a fine day. And also, and likewise, and besides, and howsomever, I heard Jim singing, and that nigger never sings in bad weather. Jim's a fair-weather raven, and this morning he was singing like a 'lav'rock in the glen.'"

Being blind, he could not see that, suddenly, a storm of emotion swept over her face.

His cheerfulness, his boylike simplicity, his indomitable spirit, which had survived so much, and must still face so much, his almost childlike ways, and the naïve description of a blind man's perception, waked in her an almost intolerable yearning. It was not the yearning of a maid for a man. It was the uncontrollable woman in her, the mother-thing, belonging to the first woman that ever was—protection of the weak, hovering love for the suffering, the ministering spirit.

Since Ingolby had been brought to the house in the pines, Madame Bulteel and herself, with Jim, had nursed him through the Valley of the Shadow. They had nursed him through brain-fever, through agonies which could not have been borne with consciousness. The tempest of the mind and the pains of misfortune went on from hour to hour, from day to day, almost without ceasing, until at last, a shadow of his former self, but with a wonderful light on his face which came from something within, he waited patiently for returning strength, propped up with pillows in the bed which had been Fleda's own, in the room outside which Jethro Fawe had sung his heathen serenade.

It was the room of the house which, catching the morning sun, was best suited for an invalid. So she had given it to him with an eagerness behind which was the feeling that somehow it made him more of the inner circle of her own life; for apart from every other feeling she had, there was in her a deep spirit

of comradeship belonging to far-off times when her life was that of the open road, the hillside and the vale. In those days no man was a stranger; all belonged.

To meet, and greet, and pass was the hourly event, but the meeting and the greeting had in it the familiarity of a common wandering, the sympathy of the homeless. Had Ingolby been less to her than he was, there would still have been the comradeship which made her the great creature she was fast becoming. It was odd that, as Ingolby became thinner and thinner, and ever more wan, she, in spite of her ceaseless nursing, appeared to thrive physically. She had even slightly increased the fulness of her figure. The velvet of her cheeks had grown richer, and her eyes deeper with warm fire. It was as though she flourished on giving: as though a hundred nerves of being and feeling had opened up within her and had expanded her life like some fine flower.

Gazing at Ingolby now there was a great hungering desire in her heart. She looked at the sightless eyes, and a passionate protest sprang to her lips which, in spite of herself, broke forth in a sort of moan.

"What is it?" Ingolby asked, with startled face.

"Nothing," she answered, "nothing. I pricked my finger badly, that's all."

And, indeed, she had done so, but that would not have brought the moan to her lips.

"Well, it didn't sound like a pricked finger complaint," he remarked. "It was the kind of groan I'd give if I had a bad pain inside."

"Ah, but you're a man!" she remarked lightly, though two tears fell down her cheeks.

With an effort she recovered herself. "It's time for your tonic," she added, and she busied herself with giving it to him. "As soon as you have taken it, I'm going for a walk, so you must make up your mind to have some sleep."

"Am I to be left alone?" he asked, with an assumed grievance in his voice.

"Madame Bulteel will stay with you," she replied.

"Do you need a walk so very badly?" he asked presently.

"I don't suppose I need it, but I want it," she answered. "My feet and the earth are very friendly."

"Where do you walk?" he asked.

"Just anywhere," was her reply. "Sometimes up the river, sometimes down, sometimes miles away in the woods."

"Do you never take a gun with you?"

"Of course," she answered, nodding, as though he could see. "I get wild pigeons and sometimes a wild duck or a prairie-hen."

"That's right," he remarked; "that's right."

"I don't believe in walking just for the sake of walking," she continued. "It doesn't do you any good, but if you go for something and get it, that's what puts the mind and the body right."

Suddenly his face grew grave. "Yes, that's it," he remarked. "To go for something you want, a long way off. You don't feel the fag when you're thinking of the thing at the end; but you've got to

have the thing at the end, to keep making for it, or there's no good going—none at all. That's life; that's how it is. It's no good only walking—you've got to walk somewhere. It's no good simply going—you've got to go somewhere. You've got to fight for something. That's why, when they take the something you fight for away—when they break you and cripple you, and you can't go anywhere for what you want badly, life isn't worth living."

An anxious look came into her face. This was the first time, since recovering consciousness, that he had referred, even indirectly, to all that had happened. She understood him well—ah, terribly well! It was the tragedy of the man stopped in his course because of one mistake, though he had done ten thousand wise things. The power taken from his hands, the interrupted life, the dark future, the beginning again, if ever his sight came back: it was sickening, heart-breaking.

She saw it all in his face, but as if some inward voice had spoken to him, his face cleared, the swift-moving hands clasped in front of him, and he said quietly: "But because it's life, there it is. You have to take it as it comes."

He stopped a moment, and in the pause she reached out her hand with a sudden passionate gesture, to touch his shoulder, but she restrained herself in time.

He seemed to feel what she was doing, and turned his face towards her, a slight flush coming to his cheeks. He smiled, and then he said: "How wonderful you are! You look——"

He checked himself, then added with a quizzical smile:

"You are looking very well to-day, Miss Fleda Druse, very well indeed. I like that dark-red dress you're wearing."

An almost frightened look came into her eyes. It was as though he could see, for she was wearing a dark-red dress—"wine-coloured," her father called it, "maroon," Madame Bulteel called it. Could he then see, after all?"

"How did you know it was dark-red?" she asked, her voice shaking.

"Guessed it! Guessed it!" he answered almost gleefully. "Was I right? Is it dark-red?"

"Yes, dark-red," she answered. "Was it really a guess?"

"Ah, but the guessiest kind of a guess," he replied. "But who can tell? I couldn't see it, but is there any reason why the mind shouldn't see when the eyes are no longer working? Come now," he added, "I've a feeling that I can tell things with my mind just as if I saw them. I do see. I'll guess the time now—with my mind's eye."

Concentration came into his face. "It's three minutes to twelve o'clock," he said decisively.

She took up the watch which lay on the table beside the bed.

"Yes, it's just three minutes to twelve," she declared in an awe-struck voice. "That's marvellous—how wonderful you are!"

"That's what I said of you a minute ago," he re-

turned. Then, with a swift change of voice and manner, he added, "How long is it?"

"You mean, since you came here?" she asked, divining what was in his mind.

"Exactly. How long?"

"Six weeks," she answered. "Six weeks and three days."

"Why don't you add the hour, too?" he urged half-plaintively, though he smiled.

"Well, it was three o'clock in the morning to the minute," she answered.

"Old Father Time ought to make you his chief of staff," he remarked gaily. "Now, I want to know," he added, with a visible effort of determination, "what has happened since three o'clock in the morning, six weeks and three days ago. I want you to tell me what has happened to my concerns—to the railways, and also to the towns. I don't want you to hide anything, because, if you do, I'll have Jim in, and Jim, under proper control, will tell me the whole truth, and perhaps more than the truth. That's the way with Jim. When he gets started he can't stop. Tell me exactly everything."

Anxiety drove the colour from her cheeks. She shrank back.

"You must tell me," he urged. "I'd rather hear it from you than from Dr. Rockwell, or Jim, or your father. Your telling wouldn't hurt as much as anybody else's, if there has to be any hurt. Don't you understand—but *don't* you understand?" he urged.

She nodded to herself in the mirror on the wall

opposite. "I'll try to understand," she replied presently.

"Tell me, then: have they put someone in my place?"

"I understand so," she replied.

He remained silent for a moment, his face very pale.

"Who is running the show?" he asked.

She told him.

"Oh, him!" he exclaimed. "He's dead against my policy. He'll make a mess."

"They say he's doing that," she remarked.

He asked her a series of questions which she tried to answer frankly, and he came to know that the trouble between the two towns, which, after the Orange funeral and his own disaster had subsided, was up again; that the railways were in difficulties; that there had been several failures in the town; that one of the banks—the Regent—had closed its doors; that Felix Marchand, having recovered from the injury he had received from Gabriel Druse on the day of the Orange funeral, had gone East for a month and had returned; that the old trouble was reviving in the mills, and that Marchand had linked himself with the enemies of the group controlling the railways hitherto directed by himself.

For a moment after she had answered his questions, there was strong emotion in his face, and then it cleared.

He reached out a hand towards her. How eagerly she clasped it! It was cold, and hers was so warm and firm and kind.

"True friend o' mine!" he said with feeling. "How wonderful it is that somehow it all doesn't seem to matter so much. I wonder why? I wonder —Tell me about yourself, about your life," he added abruptly, as though it had been a question he had long wished to ask. In the tone was a quiet certainty suggesting that she would not hesitate to answer.

"We have both had big breaks in our lives," he went on. "I know that. I've lost everything, in a way, by the break in my life, and I've an idea that you gained everything when the break in yours came. I didn't believe the story Jethro Fawe told me, but still I knew there was some truth in it; something that he twisted to suit himself. I started life feeling I could conquer the world like another Alexander or Napoleon. I don't know that it was all conceit. It was the wish to do, to see how far this thing on my shoulders"—he touched his head—"and this great physical machine"—he touched his breast with a thin hand—"would carry me. I don't believe the main idea was vicious. It was wanting to work a human brain to its last volt of capacity, and to see what it could do. I suppose I became selfish as I forged on. I didn't mean to be, but concentration upon the things I had to do prevented me from being the thing I ought to be. I wanted, as they say, to get there. I had a lot of irons in the fire—too many—but they weren't put there deliberately. One thing led to another, and one thing, as it were, hung upon another, until they all got to be part of the scheme. Once they got there, I had to carry them all on, I

couldn't drop any of them; they got to be my life. It didn't matter that it all grew bigger and bigger, and the risks got greater and greater. I thought I could weather it through, and so I could have done, if it hadn't been for a mistake and an accident; but the mistake was mine. That's where the thing nips—the mistake was mine. I took too big a risk. You see, I'd got so used to being lucky, it seemed as if I couldn't go wrong. Everything had come my way. Ever since I began in that Montreal railway office, after leaving college, I hadn't a single setback. I pulled things off. I made money, and I plumped it all into my railways and the Regent Bank; and as you said a minute ago, the Regent Bank has closed down. That cuts me clean out of the game. What was the matter with the bank? The manager?"

His voice was almost monotonous in its quietness. It was as though he told the story of something which had passed beyond chance or change. As it unfolded to her understanding, she had seated herself near to his bed. The door of the room was open, and in view outside on the landing sat Madame Bulteel reading. She was not, however, near enough to hear the conversation.

Ingolby's voice was low, but it sounded as loud as a waterfall in the ears of the girl, who, in a few weeks, had travelled great distances on the road called Experience, that other name for life.

"It was the manager?" he repeated.

"Yes, they say so," she answered. "He speculated with bank money."

"In what?"

"In your railways," she answered hesitatingly.

"Curious—I dreamed that," Ingolby remarked quietly, and leaned down and stroked the dog lying at his feet. It had been with him through all his sickness. "It must have been part of my delirium, because, now that I've got my senses back, it's as though someone had told me about it. Speculated in my railways, eh? Chickens come home to roost, don't they? I suppose I ought to be excited over it all," he continued. "I suppose I ought. But the fact is, you only have just the one long, big moment of excitement when great trouble and tragedy come, or else it's all excitement, all the time, and then you go mad. That's the test, I think. When you're struck by Fate, as a hideous war-machine might strike you, and the whole terror of loss and ruin bears down on you, you're either swept away in an excitement that hasn't any end, or you brace yourself, and become master of the shattering thing."

"You are a master," she interposed. "You are the Master Man," she repeated admiringly.

He waved a hand deprecatingly. "Do you know, when we talked together in the woods soon after you ran the Rapids—you remember the day—if you had said that to me then, I'd have cocked my head and thought I was a jim-dandy, as they say. A Master Man was what I wanted to be. But it's a pretty barren thing to think, or to feel, that you're a Master Man; because, if you are—if you've had a 'scoop' all the way, as Jowett calls it, you can be as sure as anything that no one cares a rap farthing

what happens to you. There are plenty who pretend they care, but it's only because they're sailing with the wind, and with your even keel. It's only the Master Man himself that doesn't know in the least he's that who gets anything out of it all."

"Aren't you getting anything out of it?" she asked softly. "Aren't you—Chief?"

At the familiar word—Jowett always called him Chief—a smile slowly stole across his face. "I really believe I am, thanks to you," he said nodding.

He was going to say, "Thanks to you, *Fleda*," but he restrained himself. He had no right to be familiar, to give an intimate turn to things. His game was over; his journey of ambition was done. He saw this girl with his mind's eye—how much he longed to see her with the eyes of the body—in all her strange beauty; and he knew that even if she cared for him, such a sacrifice as linking her life with his was impossible. Yet her very presence there was like a garden of bloom to him: a garden full of the odour of life, of vital things, of sweet energy and happy being. Somehow, he and she were strangely alike. He knew it. From the time he held her in his arms at Carillon, he knew it. The great adventurous spirit which was in him belonged also to her. That was as sure as light and darkness.

"No, there's no master man in me, but I think I know what one could be like," he remarked at last.

He straightened himself against the pillows. The old look of power came to a face hardly strong enough to bear it. It was so fine and thin now, and the spirit in him was so prodigious.

"No one cares what happens to the man who always succeeds; no one loves him," he continued. "Do you know, in my trouble I've had more out of nigger Jim's affection than I've had in my life. Then there's Rockwell, Osterhaut, and Jowett, and there's your father. It was worth while living to feel the real thing." His hands went out as though grasping something good and comforting. "I don't suppose every man needs to be struck as hard as I've been to learn what's what, but I've learned it. I give you my word of honour, I've learned it."

Her face flushed and her eyes kindled greatly. "Jim, Rockwell, Osterhaut, Jowett, and my father!" she exclaimed. "Of course trouble wouldn't do anything but make them come closer round you. Poor people live so near to misfortune all the time—I mean poor people like Jim, Osterhaut, and Jowett—that changes of fortune are just natural things to them. As for my father, he has had to stretch out his hands so often to those in trouble——"

"That he carried me home on his shoulders from the bridge six weeks and three days ago, at three o'clock in the morning," interjected Ingolby with a quizzical smile.

"Why did you omit Madame Bulteel and myself when you mentioned those who showed their—friendship?" she asked, hesitating at the last word. "Haven't we done our part?"

"I was talking of *men*," he answered. "One knows what women do. They may leave you in the bright days, not in the dark days. On the majority of them you couldn't rely in prosperity, but in mis-

fortune you couldn't do anything else. They are there with you. They're made that way. The best life can give you in misfortune is a woman. It's the great beginning-of-the-world thing in them. Men can't stand prosperity, but women can stand misfortune. Why, if Jim and Osterhaut and Jowett and all the men of Lebanon and Manitou had deserted me, I shouldn't have been surprised; but I'd have had to recast my philosophy if Fleda Druse had turned her bonny brown head away."

It was evident he was making an effort to conquer emotions which were rising in him; that he was playing on the surface to prevent his deep feelings from breaking forth. "Instead of which," he added jubilantly, "here I am, in the nicest room in the world, in a fine bed with springs like an antelope's heels."

He laughed, and hunched his back into the mattress. It was the laugh of the mocker, but he was mocking himself. She did not misunderstand. It was a nice room, as he said. He had never seen it with his eyes, but if he had seen it he would have realized how like herself it was—adorably fresh, happily coloured, sumptuous and fine. It had simple curtains, white sheets, and a warm carpet on the floor; and yet with something, too, that struck the note of a life outside. A pennant of many colours hung where two soft pink curtains joined, and at the window and over the door was an ancient cross in bronze and gold. It was not the simple Christian cross of the modern world, but an ancient one which had become a symbol of the Romanys, a sign to mark the highways, the guide of the wayfarers.

The pennant had been on the pole of the Ry's tent in far-off days in the Roumelian country. In the girl herself there was that which corresponded to the gorgeous pennant and the bronze cross. It was not in dress or in manner, for there was no sign of garishness, of the unusual anywhere—in manner she was as well controlled as any woman of fashion, in dress singularly reserved—but in the depths of the eyes there was some restless, unsettled thing, some flicker of strange banners akin to the pennant at the joining of the pink curtains. There had been something of the same look in Ingolby's eyes in the past, only with him it was the sense of great adventure, intrepid enterprise, a touch of vision and the beckoning thing. That look was not in his eyes now. Nothing was there; no life, no soul; only darkness. But did that look still inhabit the eyes of the soul?

He answered the question himself. "I'd start again in a different way if I could," he said musingly, his face towards the girl. "It's easy to say that, but I would. It isn't only the things you get, it's how you use them. It isn't only the things you do, it's why you do them. But I'll never have a chance now; I'll never have a chance to try the new way. I'm done."

Something almost savage leaped into her eyes—a wild, bitter protest, for it was her tragedy, too, if he was not to regain his sight. The great impulse of a nature which had been disciplined into reserve broke forth.

"It isn't so," she said with a tremor in her voice. All that he—and she—was in danger of losing came

home to her. "It isn't so. You shall get well again. Your sight will come back. To-morrow, perhaps to-day, Hindlip, the great oculist, comes from New York. Mr. Warbeck, the Montreal man, holds out hopes. If the New York man says the same, why despair? Perhaps in another month you will be on your feet again, out in the world, fighting, working, mastering, just as you used to do."

A sudden stillness seemed to take possession of him. His lips parted; his head was thrust forward slightly as though he saw something in the distance. He spoke scarcely above a whisper.

"I didn't know the New York man was coming. I didn't know there was any hope at all," he said with awe in his tones.

"We told you there was," she answered.

"Yes, I know. But I thought you were all only trying to make it easier for me, and I heard Warbeck say to Rockwell, when they thought I was asleep, 'It's ten to one against him.'"

"Did you hear that?" she said sorrowfully. "I'm so sorry; but Mr. Warbeck said afterwards—only a week ago—that the chances were even. That's the truth. On my soul and honour it's the truth. He said the chances were even. It was he suggested Mr. Hindlip, and Hindlip is coming now. He's on the way. He may be here to-day. Oh, be sure, be sure, be sure, it isn't all over. You said your life was broken. It isn't. You said my life had been broken. It wasn't. It was only the wrench of a great change. Well, it's only the wrench of a great change in your life. You said I gained every-

thing in the great change of my life. I did; and the great change in your life won't be lost, it will be gain, too. I know it; in my heart I know it."

With sudden impulse she caught his hand in both of hers, and then with another impulse, which she could not control, she caught his head to her bosom. For one instant her arms wrapped him round, and she murmured something in a language he did not understand—the language of the Roumelian country. It was only one swift instant, and then with shocked exclamation she broke away from him, dropped into a chair, and buried her face in her hands.

He blindly reached out his hand towards her as if to touch her. "Mother-girl, dear mother-girl—that's what you are," he said huskily. "What a great, kind heart you've got!"

She did not reply, but sat with face hidden in her hands, rocking backwards and forwards. He understood; he tried to help her. There was a great joy in his heart, but he dared not give it utterance.

"Please tell me about your life—about that great change in it," he said at last in a low voice. "Perhaps it would help me. Anyhow, I'd like to know, if you feel you can tell me."

For a moment she was silent. Then she said to him with an anxious note in her voice: "What do you know about my life—about the 'great change,' as you call it?"

He reached out over the coverlet, felt for a sock which he had been learning to knit, and, slowly plying the needles, replied: "I only know what Jethro Fawe told me, and he was a promiscuous liar."

"I don't think he lied about me," she answered quietly. "He told you I was a Gipsy; he told you that I was married to him. That was true. I was a Gipsy. I was married to him in the Romany way, when I was a child of three, and I never saw him again until here, the other day, on the Sagalac."

"You were married to him as much as I am," he interjected scornfully. "That was a farce. It was only a promise to pay on the part of your father. There was nothing in that. Jethro Fawe could not claim on that."

"He has tried to do so," she answered, "and if I were still a Gipsy he would have the right to do so from his standpoint."

"That sounds silly to me," Ingolby remarked, his fingers moving now more quickly with the needles.

"No, it isn't silly," she said, her voice almost as softly monotonous as his had been when he told her of his life a little while before. It was as though she was looking into her own mind and heart and speaking to herself. "It isn't silly," she repeated. "I don't think you understand. Just because a race like the Gipsies have no country and no home, so they must have things that bind them which other people don't need in the same way. Being the vagrants of the earth, so they must have things that hold them tighter than any written laws made by King or Parliament. Unless the Gipsies kept their laws sacred they couldn't hold together at all. They're iron and steel, the Gipsy laws. They can't be stretched, and they can't be twisted. They can only be broken, and then there's no argument about

it. When they are broken, there's the penalty, and it has to be met."

Ingolby stopped knitting for a moment. "You don't mean that a penalty could touch you?" he asked incredulously.

"Not for breaking a law," she answered. "I'm not a Gipsy any more. I gave my word about that, and so did my father; and I'll keep it."

"Please tell me about it," he urged. "Tell me, so that I can understand everything."

There was a long pause in which Ingolby inspected carefully with his fingers the work which he was doing, but at last Fleda's voice came to him, as it seemed out of a great distance, while she began to tell of her first memories: of her life by the Danube and the Black Sea, and drew for him a picture, so as she could recall it, of her marriage with Jethro, and of the years that followed. Now and again as she told of some sordid things, of the challenge of the law in different countries, of the coarse vagabondage of the Gipsy people in this place or in that, and some indignity put upon her father, or some humiliating incident, her voice became low and pained. It seemed as if she meant that he should see all she had been in that past, which still must be part of the present and have its place in the future, however far away all that belonged to it would be. She appeared to search her mind to find that which would prejudice him against her. While speaking with slow scorn of the life which she had lived as a Gipsy, yet she tried to make him understand, too, that, in the days when she belonged to it, it all seemed natural to her,

and that its sordidness, its vagabondage did not produce repugnance in her mind when she was part of it. Unwittingly she over-coloured the picture, and he knew she did.

In spite of herself, however, some aspects of the old life called forth pictures of happy Nature, of busy animal life of wood and glen and stream and footpath which was exquisite in its way. She was in spirit at one with the multitudinous world of nature among which so many men and women lived, without seeing or knowing. It was all undesignedly a part of herself, and she was one of a population in a universal nation whose devout citizen she was. Sometimes in response to an interjection from Ingolby, deftly made, she told of some incident which revealed as great a poetic as dramatic instinct. As she talked, Ingolby in his imagination pictured her as a girl of ten or twelve, in a dark-red dress, brown curls falling in profusion on her shoulders, with a clear, honest, beautiful eye, and a face that only spoke of a joy of living, in which the small things were the small things and the great things were the great: the perfect proportion of sane life in a sane world.

Now and again, carried away by the history of things remembered, she visualized scenes for him with the ardour of an artist and a lover of created things. He realized how powerful a hold the old life still had upon her. She understood it, too, for when at last she told of the great event in England which changed her life, and made her a deserter from Gipsy life; when she came to the giving of the

pledge to a dying woman, and how she had kept that pledge, and how her father had kept it, sternly, faithfully, in spite of all it involved, she said to him:

"It may seem strange to you, living as I live now in one spot, with everything to make life easy, that I should long sometimes for that old life. I hate it in my heart of hearts, yet there's something about it that belongs to me, that's behind me, if that tells you anything. It's as though there was some other self in me which reached far, far back into centuries, that wills me to do this and wills me to do that. It sounds mad to you of course, but there have been times when I have had a wild longing to go back to it all, to what some Gorgio writers call the pariah world—the Ishmaelites."

More than once Ingolby's heart throbbed heavily against his breast as he felt the passion of her nature, its extraordinary truthfulness, making it clear to him by indirect phrases that even Jethro Fawe, whom she despised, still had a hateful fascination for her. It was all at variance to her present self, but it summoned her through the long avenues of ancestry, predisposition; through the secret communion of those who, being dead, yet speak.

"It's a great story told in a great way," he said, when she had finished. "It's the most honest thing I ever heard, but it's not the most truthful thing I ever heard. I don't think we can tell the exact truth about ourselves. We try to be honest; we are savagely in earnest about it, and so we exaggerate the bad things we do, and we often show distrust of the good things we do. That's not a fair

picture. I believe you've told me the truth as you see it and feel it, but I don't think it's the real truth. In my mind I sometimes see an oriel window in the college where I spent three years. I used to work and think for hours in that oriel window, and in the fights I've been having lately I've looked back and thought I wanted it again; wanted to be there in the peace of it all, with the books, and the lectures, and the drone of history, and the drudgery of examinations; but if I did go back to it, three days 'd sicken me, and if you went back to the Gipsy life three days 'd sicken you."

"Yes, I know. Three hours would sicken me. But what might not happen in those three hours! Can't you understand?".

Suddenly she got to her feet with a passionate exclamation, her clenched hands went to her temples in an agony of emotion. "Can't you understand?" she repeated. "It's the going back at all for three days, for three hours, for three minutes that counts. It might spoil everything; it might kill my life."

His face flushed, crimsoned, then became pale; his hands ceased moving; the knitting lay still on his knee.

"Maybe, but you aren't going back for three minutes, any more than I'm going back to the oriel window for three seconds," he said. "We dreamers have a lot of agony in thinking about the things we're never going to do—just as much agony as in thinking about the things we've done. Every one of us dreamers ought to be insulated. We ought to

wear emotional lightning-rods to carry off the brain-waves into the ground.

"I've never heard such a wonderful story," he added, after an instant, with an intense longing to hold out his arms to her, and a still more intense will to do no such wrong. A blind man had no right or title to be a slave-owner, for that was what marriage to him would be. A wife would be a victim. He saw himself, felt himself being gradually devitalized, with only the placid brain left, considering only the problem of hourly comfort, and trying to neutralize the penalties of blindness. She must not be sacrificed to that, for apart from all else she had greatness of a kind in her. He knew far better than he had said of the storm of emotion in her, and he knew that she had not exaggerated the temptation which sang in her ears. Jethro Fawe—the thought of the man revolted him; and yet there was something about the fellow, a temperamental power, the glamour and garishness of Nature's gifts, prostituted though they were, finding expression in a striking personality, in a body of athletic grace—a man-beauty.

"Have you seen Jethro Fawe lately?" he asked.

"Not since"—she was going to say not since the morning her father had passed the sentence of the *patrin* upon him; but she paused in time. "Not since everything happened to you," she added presently.

"He knows the game is up," Ingolby remarked with forced cheerfulness. "He won't be asking for any more."

"It's time for your milk and brandy," she said suddenly, emotion subsiding and a look of purpose coming into her face. She poured out the liquid, and gave the glass into his hand. His fingers touched hers.

"Your hands are cold," she said to him.

"Cold hands, warm heart," he chattered.

A curious, wilful, rebellious look came into her eyes. "I shouldn't have thought it in your case," she said, and with sudden resolve turned towards the door. "I'll send Madame Bulteel," she added. "I'm going for a walk."

She had betrayed herself so much, had shown so recklessly what she felt, and yet, yet why did he not —she did not know what she wanted him to do. It was all a great confusion. Vaguely she realized what had been working in him, but yet the knowledge was dim indeed. She was a woman. In her heart of hearts she knew that he did care for her, and yet in her heart of hearts she denied that he cared.

She was suddenly angry with herself, angry with him, the poor blind man, back from the Valley of the Shadow. She had not reached the door, however, when Madame Bulteel entered the room.

"The doctor from New York has come," she said, holding out a note from Dr. Rockwell. "He will be here in a couple of hours."

Fleda turned back towards the bed.

"Good luck!" she said. "You'll see, it will be all right."

"Certainly I'll *see* if it's all right," he said cheer-

fully. "Am I tidy? Have I used Pears' soap?" He would have his joke at his own funeral if possible.

"There are two hours to get you fit to be seen," she rejoined with raillery, infected by his cheerfulness in spite of herself. "Madame Bulteel is very brave. Nothing is too hard for her!"

An instant later she was gone, with her heart telling her to go back to him, not to leave him, but yet with a longing stronger still driving her to the open world, to which she could breathe her trouble in great gasps, as she sped onward through the woods and by the river. To love a blind man was sheer madness, but in her was a superstitious belief that he would see again. It prevailed against the doubts and terrors. It made her resent his own sense of fatality, his own belief that he would be in darkness all his days.

In the room where he awaited the verdict of the expert, he kept saying to himself:

"She would have made everything else look cheap —if it could have been."

CHAPTER XXI

THE SNARE OF THE FOWLER

THE last rays of the setting sun touched the gorgeous Autumn woods with a loving, bright glow, and the day stole pensively away into a purple bed beyond the sight of the eyes. From a lonely spot by the river, Fleda watched the westering gleam until it vanished, her soul alive to the melancholy beauty of it all. Not a human being seemed to be within the restricted circle of her vision. There were only to be seen the deep woods, in myriad tints of bronze and red and saffron, and the swift-flowing river. Overhead was the Northern sky, so clear, so thrilling, and the stars were beginning to sparkle in the incredibly swift twilight which links daytime and nighttime in that Upper Land. Lonely and delicately sad it all looked, but there was no feeling of loneliness among those who lived the life of the Sagalac. Many a man has stood on a wide plain of snow, white to the uttermost horizon, or in the yellow-brown grass of the Summer prairie, empty of all human life so far as eye could see, and yet has felt no solitude. It is as though the air itself is inhabited by a throng of happy comrades whispering in the communion of the invisible world.

As a child Fleda had often gazed upon just such scenes, lonely and luminous, but she was only conscious then of a vague and pleasant awe, a kindly confusion, which, like the din of innumerable bees, lulled wonder to sleep. Even as a child, however, something of what it meant had pierced her awe and wonder. Once as she crossed a broken, bare mountain of Roumania she had seen a wild ass perched upon a high summit gazing, as it were, over the wide valley, where beneath, among the rocks, other wild asses wandered. There was something so statue-like in this immovable wild creature that Fleda had watched it till it was hid from her view by a jutting rock. But the thing which made a lasting impression, drawing her nearer to nature-life than all that had chanced since she was born, was the fact that on returning, hours after, the wild ass was still standing upon the summit of the hill, still gazing across the valley. Or was it gazing across the valley? Was there some other vision commanding its sight?

So a young wife not yet a mother loses herself for hours together in a vista of unexplored experience. Fleda had passed on, out of sight of the wild ass on the hills, but for ever after the memory of it remained with her and the picture of it sprang to her eye innumerable times. The hypnotized wild thing —hypnotized by its own vague instinct, or by something outside itself—became to her as the Sphinx to the Egyptian, the everlasting question of existence.

Now, as she watched the day fleeing, and night with swift stealthiness coming on, that unforgettable

picture of the Roumanian hills came to her again. The instinct of those far-off days which had been little removed from the finest animal intelligence had now developed into thought. Brain and soul strove to grasp what it all meant, and what the revelation was between Nature and herself. Nature was so vast; she was so insignificant; changes in its motionless inorganic life were imperceptible save through the telescopes of years; but she, like the wind, the water, and the clouds, was variable, inconstant. Was there any real relation between the vast, imperturbable earth, its seas, its forests, its mountains and its plains, its life of tree and plant and flower and the men and women dotted on its surface? Did they belong to each other, or were mankind only, as it were, vermin infesting the desirable world? Did they belong to each other? It meant so much if they did belong, and she loved to think they did. Many a time she kissed the smooth bole of a maple or whispered to it; or laid her cheek against a mossy rock and murmured a greeting in the spirit of a companionship as old as the making of the world.

On the evening of this day of her destiny—carrying the story of her own fate within its twenty-four hours—she was in a mood of detachment from life's routine. As at a great opera, a sensitive spirit loses itself in visions alien to the music and yet born of it, so she, lost in this primeval scene before her, saw visions of things to be.

If Ingolby's sight came back! In her abstraction she saw him with sight restored and by her side, and

even in that joy her mind felt a hovering sense of invasion, no definite, visible thing, but a presence which made shadow. Suddenly oppressed by it, she turned back into the woods from the river-bank to make for home. She had explored nearly every portion of this river-country for miles up and down, but on this evening, lost in her dreams, she had wandered into less familiar regions. There was no chance of her being lost, so long as she kept near to the river, and indeed by instinct and not by thought or calculation she made her way about at all times. Turned homeward, she walked for about a quarter of a mile, retreading the path by which she had come. It was growing darker, and, being in unfamiliar surroundings, she hurried on, though she knew well what course to take. Following the bank of the river she would have increased her walk greatly, as the stream made a curve at a point above Manitou, and then came back again to its original course; so she cut across the promontory, taking the most direct line homeward.

Presently, however, she became conscious of other people in the wood besides herself. She saw no one, but she heard breaking twigs, the stir of leaves, the flutter of a partridge which told of human presence. The underbrush was considerable, darkness was coming on, and she had a sense of being surrounded. It agitated her, but she pulled herself together, stood still and admonished herself. She called herself a fool; she asked herself if she was going to be a coward. She laughed out loud at her own apprehension; but a chill stole into her blood when she

heard near by—there was no doubt about it now—mockery of her own laughter. Then suddenly, before she could organize her senses, a score of men seemed to rise up from the ground around her, to burst out from the bushes, to drop from the trees, and to storm upon her. She had only time to realize that they were Romanys, before scarfs were thrown around her head, bound around her body, and, unconscious, she was carried away into the deep woods.

When she regained consciousness Fleda found herself in a tent, set in a kind of prairie amphitheatre valanced by shrubs and trees. Bright fires burned here and there, and dark-featured men squatted upon the ground, cared for their horses, or busied themselves near two large caravans, at the doors or on the steps of which now and again appeared a woman.

She had waked without moving, had observed the scene without drawing the attention of a man—a sentry—who sat beside the tent door. The tent was empty save for herself. There was little in it besides the camp-bed against the tent wall, upon which she lay, and the cushions supporting her head. She had waked carefully, as it were: as though some inward monitor had warned her of impending danger. She realized that she had been kidnapped by Romanys, and that the hand behind the business was that of Jethro Fawe. The adventurous and reckless Fawe family had its many adherents in the Romany world, and Jethro was its head, the hereditary claimant for its leadership.

Notwithstanding the Ry of Rys' prohibition, there had drawn nearer and ever nearer to him, from the Romany world he had abandoned, many of his people, never, however, actually coming within his vision till the appearance of Jethro Fawe. Here and there on the prairie, to a point just beyond Gabriel Druse's horizon, they had come from all parts of the world; and Jethro, reckless and defiant under the Sentence, and knowing that the chances against his life were a million to one, had determined on one bold stroke which, if it failed, would make his fate no worse, and, if it succeeded, would give him his wife and, maybe, headship over all the Romany world. For weeks he had planned, watched and waited, filling the woods with his adherents, secretly following Fleda day by day, until, at last, the opportunity seemed perfect; and here she lay in a Romany *tan* once more, with the flickering fires outside in the night, and the sentry at her doorway. This watchman was not Jethro Fawe, but she knew well that Jethro was not far off.

Through the open door of the tent, for some minutes, her eyes studied the segment of the circle within her vision, and she realized that here was an organized attempt to force her back into the Romany world. If she repudiated the Gorgio life and acknowledged herself a Romany once again, she knew her safety would be secured; but in truth she had no fear for her life, for no one would dare to defy the Ry of Rys so far as to kill his daughter. But she was in danger of another kind—in deep and terrible danger; and she knew it well. As the

thought of it took possession of her, her heart seemed almost to burst. Not fear, but anger and emotion possessed her. All the Romany in her stormed back again from the past. It sent her to her feet with a scarcely smothered cry. She was not quicker, however, than was the figure at the tent door, which, with a half-dozen others, sprang up as she appeared. A hand was raised, and, as if by magic, groups of Gipsies, some sitting, some standing, some with the Gipsy fiddle, one or two with flutes, began a Romany chant in a high, victorious key, and women threw upon the fire powders from which flamed up many coloured lights.

In a moment the camp was transformed. From the woods around came swarthy-faced men, with great gold rings in their ears and bright scarfs around their necks or waists, some of them handsome, dirty and insolent; others ugly, watchful, and quiet in manner and face; others still most friendly and kind in face and manner. All showed instant respect for Fleda. They raised their hands in a gesture of salutation as a Zulu chief thrusts up a long arm and shouts "*Inkoos!*" to one whom he honours. Some, however, made the sweeping Oriental gesture of the right hand, palm upward, and almost touching the ground—a sign of obedience and infinite respect. It had all been well arranged. Skilfully managed as it was, however, there was something in it deeper than theatrical display or dramatic purpose.

It was clear that many of them were deeply moved at being in the presence of the daughter of the Ry of Rys, who had for so long exiled himself. Racial,

family, clan feeling spoke in voice and gesture, in look and attitude; but yet there were small groups of younger men whose salutations were perfunctory, not to say mocking. These were they who resented deeply Fleda's defection, and truthfully felt that she had passed out of their circle for ever; that she despised them, and looked down on them from another sphere. They were all about the age of Jethro Fawe, but were of a less civilized type, and had semi-barbarism written all over them. Unlike Jethro they had never known the world of cities. They repudiated Fleda, because their ambition could not reach to her. They recognized the touch of fashion and of form, of a worldly education, of a convention which lifted her away from the *tan* and the caravan, from the everlasting itinerary. They had not had Jethro's experiences in fashionable hotels of Europe, at midnight parties, at gay suppers, at garish dances, where Gorgio ladies answered the amorous looks of the ambitious Romany with the fiddle at his chin. Because these young Romanys knew they dare not aspire, they were resentful; but Jethro, the head of the rival family and the son of the dead claimant to the headship, had not such compulsory modesty. He had ranged far and wide, and his expectations were extensive. He was nowhere to be seen in the groups which sang and gestured in the light of the many coloured fires, though once or twice Fleda's quickened ear detected his voice, exulting, in the chorus of song.

Presently, as she stood watching, listening, and strangely moved in spite of herself by the sudden

dramatic turn which things had taken, a seat was brought to her. It was a handsome stool, looted perhaps from some château in the Old World, and over it was thrown a dark-red cloth which gave a semblance of dignity to the seat of authority, which it was meant to be.

Fleda did not refuse the honour. She had choked back the indignant words which had rushed to her lips as she left the tent where she had been lying. Prudence had bade her await developments. She could not yet make up her mind what to do. It was clear that a bold and deep purpose lay behind it all, and she could not tell how far-reaching it was, nor what it represented of rebellion against her father's authority. That it did represent rebellion she had no doubt. She was well enough aware of the claims of Jethro's dead father to the leadership, abandoned for three thousand pounds and marriage with herself; and she was also aware that while her father's mysterious isolation might possibly have developed a reverence for him, yet active pressure and calumny might well have done its work. Also, if the marriage was repudiated, Jethro would be justified in resuming the family claim to the leadership.

She seated herself upon the scarlet seat with a gesture of thanks, while the salutations and greetings increased; then she awaited events, thrilled by the weird and pleasant music, with its touches of Eastern fantasy. In spite of herself she was moved, as Romanys, men and women, ran forward in excitement with arms raised towards her as though they meant to strike her, then suddenly stopped short,

made obeisance, called a greeting, and ran backwards to their places.

Presently a group of men began a ceremony or ritual, before which the spectators now and again covered their eyes, or bent their heads low, or turned their backs, and raised their hands in a sort of ascription. As the ceremony neared its end, with its strange genuflections, a woman dressed in white was brought forward, her hands bound behind her, her hair falling over her shoulders, and after a moment of apparent denunciation on the part of the head of the ceremony, she was suddenly thrown to the ground, and the pretence of drawing a knife across her throat was made. As Fleda watched it she shuddered, but presently braced herself, because she knew that this ritual was meant to show what the end must be of those who, like herself, proved traitor to the traditions of race.

It was at this point, when fifty knives flashed in the air, with vengeful exclamations, that Jethro Fawe appeared in the midst of the crowd. He was dressed in the well-known clothes which he had worn since the day he first declared himself at Gabriel Druse's home, and, compared with his friends around him, he showed to advantage. There was command in his bearing, and experience of life had given him primitive distinction.

For a moment he stood looking at Fleda in undisguised admiration, for she made a remarkable picture. Animal beauty was hers, too. There was a delicate, athletic charm in her body and bearing; but it added to, rather than took away from, the

authority of her presence, so differing from Jethro. She had never compared herself with others, and her passionate intelligence would have rebelled against the supremacy of the body. She had no physical vanity, but she had some mental vanity, and it placed mind so far above matter that her beauty played no part in her calculations. At sight of him, Fleda's blood quickened, but in indignation and in no other sense. As he came towards her, however, despising his vanity as she did, she felt how much he was above all those by whom he was surrounded. She realized his talent, and it almost made her forget his cunning and his loathsomeness. As he came near to her he made a slight gesture to someone in the crowd, and a chorus of salutations rose.

Composed and still she waited for him to come quite close to her, and the look in her face was like that of one who was scarcely conscious of what was passing around her, whose eyes saw distant things of infinite moment.

A few feet away from her he spoke.

"Daughter of the Ry of Rys, you are among your own people once again," he said. "From everywhere in the world they have come to show their love for you. You would not have come to them of your own free will, because a madness got hold of you, and so they came to you. You cut yourself off from them and told yourself you had become a Gorgio. But that was only your madness; and madness can be cured. We are the Fawes, the ancient Fawes, who ruled the Romany people before the Druses

"WE HAVE SHOWN YOU HOW GOOD IS THE END OF THOSE WHO
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came to power. We are of the ancient blood, yet we are faithful to the Druse that rules over us. His word prevails, although his daughter is mad. Daughter of the Ry of Rys, you have seen us once again. We have sung to you; we have spoken to you; we have told you what is in our hearts; we have shown you how good is the end of those who are faithful, and how terrible is the end of the traitor. Do not forget it. Speak to us."

Fleda had a fierce desire to spring to her feet and declare to them all that the sentence of the *patrin* had been passed upon Jethro Fawe, but she laid a hand upon herself. She knew they were unaware that the Sentence had been passed, else they would not have been with Jethro. In that case none would give him food or shelter or the hand of friendship; none dare show him any kindness; and it was the law that anyone against whom he committed an offence, however small, might take his life. The Sentence had been like a cloud upon her mind ever since her father had passed it; she could not endure the thought of it. She could not bring herself to speak of it—to denounce him. Sooner or later the Sentence would reach every Romany everywhere, and Jethro would pass into the darkness of oblivion, not in his own time nor in the time of Fate. The man was abhorrent to her, yet his claim was there. Mad and bad as it was, he made his claim of her upon ancient rights, and she was still enough a Romany to see his point of view.

Getting to her feet slowly, she ignored Jethro, looked into the face of the crowd, and said:

"I am the daughter of the Ry of Rys still, though I am a Romany no longer. I made a pledge to be no more a Romany and I will keep it; yet you and all Romany people are dear to me because through long generations the Druses have been of you. You have brought me here against my will. Do you think the Ry of Rys will forgive that? In your words you have been kind to me, but yet you have threatened me. Do you think that a Druse has any fear? Did a Druse ever turn his cheek to be smitten? You know what the Druses are. I am a Druse still. I will not talk longer, I have nothing to say to you all except that you must take me back to my father, and I will see that he forgives you. Some of you have done this out of love; some of you have done it out of hate; yet set me free again upon the path to my home, and I shall forget it, and the Ry of Rys will forget it."

At that instant there suddenly came forward from the doorway of a tent on the outskirts of the crowd a stalwart woman, with a strong face and a self-reliant manner. She was still young, but her slightly pock-marked countenance showed the wear and tear of sorrow of some kind. She had, indeed, lost her husband and her father in the Montenegrin wars. Hastening forward to Fleda she reached out a hand.

"Come with me," she said; "come and sleep in my tent to-night. To-morrow you shall go back to the Ry of Rys, perhaps. Come with me."

There was a sudden murmuring in the crowd, which was stilled by a motion of Jethro Fawe's hand,

and a moment afterwards Fleda gave her hand to the woman.

"I will go with you," Fleda said. Then she turned to Jethro: "I wish to speak to you alone, Jethro Fawe," she added.

He laughed triumphantly. "The wife of Jethro Fawe wishes to speak with him," he bombastically cried aloud to the assembled people, and he prepared to follow Fleda.

As Fleda entered the woman's tent a black-eyed girl, with tousled hair and a bold, sensual face, ran up to Jethro, and in an undertone of evil suggestion said to him:

"To-night is yours, Jethro. You can make to-morrow sure."

CHAPTER XXII

THE SECRET MAN

"YOU are wasting your time."

Fleda said the words with a quiet determination, and yet in the tone was a slight overemphasis which was like a call upon reserve forces within herself.

"Time is nothing to me," was the complete reply, clothed in a tone of soft irony. "I'm young enough to waste it. I've plenty of it in my knapsack."

"Have you forgotten the Sentence of the *Patrin?*"

Fleda asked the question in a voice which showed a sudden access of determination.

"He will have to wipe it out after to-morrow," replied the other with a gleam of sulky meaning and furtive purpose in his eyes.

"If you mean that I will change my mind to-morrow, and be your wife, and return to the Gipsy life, it is the thought of a fool. I asked you to come here to speak with me because I was sure I could make you see things as they truly are. I wanted to explain why I did not tell the Romanys outside there that the Sentence had been passed on you. I did not tell them because I can't forget that your people and my people have been *sib* for hundreds of years;

that you and I were children together; that we were sealed to one another when neither of us could have any say about it. If I had remained a Gipsy, who can tell—my mind might have become like yours! I think there must be something rash and bad in me somewhere, because I tell you frankly now that a chord in my heart rang when you made your wild speeches to me there in the Hut in the Wood months ago, even when I hated you, knowing you for what you are."

"That was because there was another man," interjected Jethro.

She inclined her head. "Yes, it was partly because of another man," she replied. "It is a man who suffers because of you. When he was alone among his foes, a hundred to one, you betrayed him. That itself would have made me despise you to the end of my life, even if the man had been nothing at all to me. It was a low, cowardly thing to do. You did it; and if you were my brother, I would hate you for it; if you were my father, I should leave your house; if you were my husband, I should kill you. I asked you to speak with me now because I thought that if you would go away—far away—promising never to cross my father's path, or my path, again, I could get him to withdraw the Sentence. You have kidnapped me. Where do you think you are? In Mesopotamia? You can't break the law of this country and escape as you would there. They don't take count of Romany custom here. Not only you, but every one of the Fawes here will be punished if the law reaches for your

throat. I want you to escape, and I tell you to go now. Go back to Europe. I advise you this for your own sake—because you are a Fawe and of the clan."

The blood mounted to Jethro's forehead, and he made an angry gesture. "And leave you here for him! *Mi Duvel!* I can only die once, and I would rather die near you than far away," he exclaimed.

His eyes had a sardonic look, there was a savage edge to his tongue, yet his face was flushed with devouring emotion and he was quivering with hope. That which he called love was flooding the field of his feelings, and the mad thing—the toxic impulse which is deep in the brain of Eastern races bled into his brain now. He was reckless, rebellious against fate, insanely wilful, and what she had said concerning Ingolby had roused in him the soul of Cain.

She realized it, and she was apprehensive of some desperate act; yet she had no physical fear of him. Something seemed to tell her that, no matter what happened, Ingolby would not wait for her in vain, and that he would yet *see* her enter to him again with the love-light in her eyes.

"But listen to me," Jethro said, with an unnatural shining in his eyes, his voice broken in its passion. "You think you can come it over me with your Gorgio talk and the clever things you've learned in the Gorgio world. You try to look down on me. I'm as well born or as ill born as you. The only difference between us is the way you dress, the way you live and use your tongue. All that belongs to

the life of the cities. Anyone can learn it. Anyone well born like you and me, with a little practise, can talk like Gorgio dukes and earls. I've been among them and I know. I've had my friends among them, too. I've got the hang of it all. It's no good to me, and I don't want it. It's all part of a set piece. There's no independence in that life; you live by rule. *Diable!* I know. I've been in palaces; I've played my fiddle to the women in high places who can't blush. It's no good; it brings nothing in the end. It's all hollow. Look at our people there." He swept a hand to the tent door. "They're tanned and rough, as all out-door things are rough, but they've got their share of happiness, and every day has its pleasures. Listen to them!" he cried with a gesture of exultation. "Listen to that!"

The colour slowly left Fleda's face. Outside in the light of the dying fires, under the glittering stars, in the shade of the trees, groups of Romanys were singing the Romany wedding melody, called "The Song of the Sealing." It was not like the ringing of wedding-bells alone, it sealed blessing upon the man and the woman. It was a poem in praise of marriage passion; it was a pæan proclaiming the accomplishment of life. Crude, primitive, it thrilled with Eastern feeling; a weird charm was showered from its notes.

"Listen!" exclaimed Jethro again, a fire burning in his face. "That's for you and me. To them you are my wife, and I am your man. *Mi Duvel*—it shall be so! I know women. For an hour you will

hate me; for a day you will resent me, and then you will begin to love me. You will fight me, but I will conquer. I know you—I know you—all you women. But no, it will not be I that will conquer. It's my love that will do it. It's a den of tigers. When it breaks loose it will have its way. Here it is. Can't you see it in my face? Can't you hear it in my voice? Don't you hear my heart beating? Every throb says, 'Fleda—Fleda—Felda, come to me.' I have loved you since you were three. I want you now. We can be happy. Every night we will make a new home. The world will be ours; the best that is in it will come to us. We will tap the trees of happiness—they're hid from the Gorgio world. You and I will know where to find them. Every land shall be ours; every gift of paradise within our reach—riches, power, children. Come back to your own people; be a true daughter of the Ry of Rys; live with your Romany *chal*. You will never be at home anywhere else. It's in your bones; it's in your blood; it's deeper than all. Here, now, come to me—my wife."

He flung the flap of the tent door across the opening, shutting out the camp-fires and the people. "Here—now—come. Be mine while they sing."

For one swift moment the great passion and eloquence of the man lifted her off her feet; for one instant the Romany in her triumphed, and a thrill of passion passed through her, storming her senses, like a mist shutting out all the rest of the world. This Romany was right; there was in her the wild thing—the everlasting strain of race and years

breaking down all the defences which civilized life had built up within her. Just for one instant so—and then there flashed before her a face with two blind eyes.

Like a stream of ether playing upon warm flesh, making it icy cold, so something of the ineradicable good in her swept like a frozen spray upon the elements of emotion, and with both hands she made a gesture of repulsion.

His eyes with their reddish glow burned nearer and nearer to her. He bulked over her, driving her back against the couch by the tent wall. For an instant like that—and then, with clenched hand, she struck him in the face.

Swift as had been the change in her, so a change like a cyclone swept over him. The hysterical passion which had possessed him suddenly passed, and a dark, sullen determination swept into his eyes and over his face. His lips parted in a savage smile.

"Hell, so that's what you've learned in the Gorgio world, is it?" he asked malevolently. "Then I'll teach you what they do in the Romany world; and to-morrow you can put the two together and see what they look like."

With a Romany expletive, he flung back the curtain of the tent and passed out into the night.

For a long time Fleda sat stunned and overcome by the side of the couch, her brain tortured by a thousand thoughts. She knew there was no immediate escape from the encampment. She could only rely upon the hue and cry which would be

raised and the certain hunt which would be made for her. But what might not happen before any rescue came? The ancient grudge of the Fawes against the Druses had gained power and activity by the self-imposed exile of Gabriel Druse; and Jethro had worked upon it. The veiled threats which Jethro had made she did not despise. He was a barbarian. He would kill what he loved; he would have his way with what he loved, whether or not it was the way of law or custom or right. Outside, the wedding song still made musical the night. Women's voices, shrill, and with falsetto notes, made the trees ring with it; low, bass voices gave it a kind of solemnity. The view which the encampment took of her captivity was clear. Where was the woman that brought her to the tent—whose tent it was? She seemed kind. Though her face had a hard look, surely she meant to be friendly. Or did she only mean to betray her; to give her a fancied security, and leave her to Jethro—and the night? She looked round for some weapon. There was nothing available save two brass candlesticks. Though the door of the tent was closed, she knew that there were watchers outside; that any break for liberty would only mean defeat, and yet she was determined to save herself.

As she tried to take the measure of the situation and plan what she would do, the noise of the music suddenly ceased, and she heard a voice, though low in tone, give some sort of command. Then there was a cry, and what seemed the chaotic noise of a struggle followed; then a voice a little louder

speaking, a voice of someone she remembered, though she could not place it. Something vital was happening outside, something punctuated by sharp, angry exclamations; afterwards a voice speaking soothingly, firmly, prevailed; and then there was silence. As she listened there was a footstep at the door of the tent, a voice called to her softly, and a hand drew aside the tent curtain. The woman who had brought her to this place entered.

"You are all safe now," she said, reaching out both hands to Fleda. "By long and by last, but it was a close shave! He meant to make you his wife tonight, whether you would or no. I'm a Fawe, but I'd have none of that. I was on my way to your father's house when I met someone—someone that you know. He carries your father's voice in his mouth."

She stepped to the tent door and beckoned; and out of the darkness, only faintly lightened by the dying fires, there entered one whom Fleda had seen not more than fifty times in her life, and never but twice since she had ceased to be a Romany. It was her father's secret agent, Rhodo, the Roumelian, now grizzled and gaunt, but with the same vitality which had been his in the days when she was a little child. Here and there in the world went Rhodo, the voice of the Ry of Rys to do his bidding, to say his say. No minister of a Czar was ever more dreaded or loved. His words were ever few, but his deeds had been many. Now, as he looked at Fleda, his old eyes gleamed, and he showed a double row of teeth, not one of which was imperfect, though he was seventy years of age.

"Would you like to come?" he asked. "Would you like to come home to the Ry?"

With a cry she flung herself upon him. "Rhodo! Rhodo!" she exclaimed, and now the tears broke forth, and her body shook with sobs.

A few moments later he said to her: "It's fifteen years since you kissed me last. I thought you were ashamed of old Rhodo."

She did not answer, but looked at him with eyes streaming, drawing back from him. Her embrace was astonishing even to herself, for as a child Rhodo had been a figure of awe to her, and the feeling had deepened as the years had gone on, knowing as she did his work throughout the world for the Ry of Rys. In his face was secrecy, knowledge, and some tragic underthing which gave him, apart from his office, a singular loneliness of figure and manner. He was so closely knit in form; there was such concentration in face, bearing and gesture, that the isolation of his position was greatly deepened.

"No, you never kissed me after you were old enough to like or dislike," he said with mournful and ironical reflection.

There crept into his face a kind of yearning such as one might feel who beheld afar off a promised land, and yet was denied its joys. Rhodo was wifeless, childless, and had been so for forty years. He had had no intimates among the Romany people. His life he lived alone. That the daughter of the Ry of Rys should kiss him was a thing of which he would dream when deeds were done and over and the shadows threatened.

"I will kiss you again in another fifteen years," she said half-smiling through her tears. "But tell me —tell me what has happened."

"Jethro Fawe has gone," he answered with a sweeping outward gesture.

"Where has he gone?" she asked, apprehension seizing her.

"A journey into the night," responded the old man with scorn and wrath in his tone, and his lips were set.

"Is he going far?" she asked.

"The road you might think long would be short to him," he answered.

Her hands became cold; her heart seemed to stop beating.

"What road is that?" she asked. She knew, but she must ask.

"Everybody knows it; everybody goes it some time or another," he answered darkly.

"What was it you said to all of them outside?"— she made a gesture towards the doorway. "There were angry cries, and I heard Jethro Fawe's voice."

"Yes, he was blaspheming," remarked the old man grimly.

"Tell me what it was you said, and tell me what has happened," she persisted.

The old man hesitated a moment, then said grimly: "I told them they must go one way and Jethro Fawe another. I told them the Ry of Rys had said no *patrins* should mark the road Jethro Fawe's feet walked. I had heard of this gathering here, and I was on my way to bid them begone, for in following the Ry they have broken his com-

mand. As I came, I met the woman of this tent who has been your friend. She is a good woman; she has suffered. Her people are gone, but she has a heart for others. I met her. She told me of what that rogue and devil had done and would do. He is the head of the Fawes, but the Ry of Rys is the head of all the Romanys of the world. He had spoken the Word against Jethro, and the Word shall prevail. The Word of the Ry when it is given cannot be withdrawn. It is like the rock on which the hill rests."

"They did not go with him?" she asked.

"It is not the custom," he answered sardonically. "That is a path a Romany walks alone."

Her face was white. "But he has not come to the end of the path—has he?" she asked tremulously.

"Who can tell? This day, or twenty years from now, or to-morrow, or next moon, he will come to the end of the path. No one knows, he least of all. He will not see the end, because the road is dark. I don't think it will be soon," he added, because he saw how haggard her face had grown. "No, I don't think it will be soon. He is a Fawe, at the head of all the Fawes; so perhaps there will be time for him to think, and no doubt it will not be soon."

"Perhaps it will not be at all. My father spoke, but he can withdraw his word," she urged.

Suddenly the old Gipsy's face hardened. A look of dark resolve and iron force came into it.

"The Ry will not withdraw. He has spoken, and it must be. If he spoke lightly he is not fit to rule. Unless the word of the Ry of Rys is good against

breaking, then the Romanys are no more than scattered leaves at the will of the wind. It is the word of the Ry that holds our folk together. It shall not bless, and it shall not curse in vain."

Pitying the girl's face, however, and realizing that the Gorgio life had given her a new view of things; angry with her because it was so, but loving her for herself, he added:

"But the night road may be long, though it is lonely, and if it should be that the Ry should pass before the end of the road comes to Jethro, then is Jethro freed, since the Word is gone which binds his feet for the pitfall."

"He must not die," she insisted.

"Then the Ry of Rys must not live," he rejoined sternly. With a kindly gesture, however, he stretched out his hand. "Come, we shall reach the house of the Ry before the morning," he added. "He is not returned from his journey, and so will not be troubled by having missed you. There will be an hour for beauty-sleep before the sun rises," he continued with the same wide smile with which he greeted her first. Then he lifted up the curtain and passed out into the night.

Following him, Fleda saw that the Romanys had broken camp, and only a small handful remained, among them the woman who had befriended her. Fleda went up to her:

"I will never forget you," she said. "Will you wear this for me?" she added, and she took from her throat a brooch which she had worn ever since her first days in England, after her great illness there.

The woman accepted the brooch. "Lady love," she said, "you've lost your sleep to-night, but that's a loss you can make good. If there's a night's sleep owing you, you can collect the debt some time. No, a night's sleep lost in a tent is nothing, if you're the only one in the tent. But if you're not alone, and you lose a night's sleep, someone else may pick it up, and you might never get it again!"

A flush slowly stole over Fleda's face, and a look of horror came into her eyes. She read the parable aright.

"Will you let me kiss you?" she said to the woman, and now it was the woman's turn to flush.

"You are the daughter of the Ry of Rys," she said almost shyly, yet proudly.

"I'm a girl with a debt to pay and can never pay it," Fleda answered, putting her arms impulsively around the woman's neck and kissing her. Then she took the brooch from the woman's hand, and pinned it at her throat.

"Think of Fleda of the Druses sometimes," she said, and she laid a hand upon the woman's breast.

"Lady love—lady love," said the blunt woman with the pockmarked face, "you've had the worst fright to-night that you'll ever have." She caught Fleda's hand and peered into it. "Yes, it's happiness for you now, and on and on," she added exultingly, and with the fortune-teller's air. "You've passed the danger place, and there'll be wealth and a man who's been in danger, too; and there's children, beautiful children—I see them."

In confusion, Fleda snatched her hand away.

"Good-bye, you fool-woman," she said impatiently, yet gently, too. "You talk such sense and such nonsense. Good-bye," she added brusquely, but yet she smiled at the woman as she turned away.

A moment later she was on her way back to Manitou, but she did not get to her father's house before the break of day; and in the doorway she met Madame Bulteel, whose pale, drawn face proclaimed a sleepless night.

"Tell me what has happened? Tell me what has happened?" she asked in distress.

Fleda took both her hands. "Before I answer, tell me what has happened here," she said breathlessly. "What news?"

Madame Bulteel's face lighted. "Good news," she exclaimed eagerly.

"He will see—he will see again?" Fleda asked in great agitation.

"The Montreal doctor said that the chances were even," answered Madame Bulteel. "This man from the States says it is a sure thing."

With a murmur Fleda sank into a chair, and a faintness came over her.

"That's not like a Romany," remarked old Rhodo.

"No, it's certainly not like a Romany," remarked Madame Bulteel meaningly.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RETURN OF BELISARIUS

GREY days in the prairie country do not come very often, but they are very depressing when they arrive. The landscape is not of the luscious kind; it has no close correspondence with a picture by Corot or Constable; sunlight is needed to give it the touch of the habitable and the homelike. It was, therefore, unfortunate for the spirits of the Lebanon people that the meeting summoned by local agitators to discuss with asperity affairs on both sides of the Sagalac should, while starting with fitful sunlight in the early morning, have developed to a bleak greyness by three o'clock in the afternoon, the time set for the meeting.

Another strike was imminent in the factories at Manitou and in the railway-shops at Lebanon, due to the stupidity of the policy of Ingolby's successor as to the railways and other financial and manufacturing interests. If he had planned a campaign of maladroitness he could not have more happily fulfilled his object. It was not a good time for reducing wages, or for quarrelling with the Town Councils of Manitou and Lebanon concerning assessments and other matters. November and May al-

ways found Manitou, as though to say, "upset." In the former month, men were pouring through the place on their way to the shanties for their Winter's work, and generally celebrating their coming internment by "irrigation"; in the latter month, they were returning from their Winter's imprisonment, thirsty for excitement, and with memories of Winter quarrels inciting them to "have it out of someone."

And it was in October, when the shantyman was passing through on his way to the woods—a natural revolutionary, loving trouble as a coyote loves his hole—that labour discontent was practically whipped into action, and the Councils of the two towns were stung into bitterness against the new provocative railway policy. Things looked dark enough. The trouble between the two towns and the change of control and policy of the railways, due to Ingolby's downfall, had greatly shaken land and building values in Lebanon, and a black eye, as it were, had been given to the whole district for the moment.

So serious had the situation been regarded that the Mayor of Lebanon, with Halliday the lawyer and another notable citizen, all friends of Ingolby, had "gone East"—as a journey to Montreal, Toronto, or Quebec was generally called—to confer with and make appeal to the directorate of the great railways. They went with some elation and hope, for they had arguments of an unexpected kind in their possession, carefully hidden from the rest of the population. They had returned only the day before the meeting which was to be held in the square in front of the Town Hall, to find that a platform had been built at

the very steps of the Town Hall with the assent of the Chief Constable, now recovered from illness and returned to duty. To the Deputy Mayor and the Council, the Chief Constable, on the advice of Gabriel Druse, had said that it was far better to have the meeting in front of the Town Hall where he could, on the instant, summon special constables from within if necessary, while the influence of a well-built platform and the orderly arrangement of a regular meeting were better than a mob oration from the tops of ash-barrels.

The signs were ominous. In a day of sunshine the rebellious and discontented spirit does not thrive; on a wet day it is apt to take shelter; on a bleak, grey day men are prone to huddle together in their anger with consequent stimulation of their passions.

It was a grey enough day at Lebanon, and dark-faced visitors from Manitou felt the need of Winter clothing as they shiveringly crossed the Sagalac by Ingolby's bridge. The air was raw and searching; Nature was sulky. In the sharp wind the trees shook themselves angrily free of leaves. The taverns were greatly frequented, which was not good for Manitou and Lebanon. Up to the time of the meeting, however, the expected strike had not occurred. This was mainly due to the fact that Felix Marchand, the evil genius of Manitou, had not been seen in the town or in the district for over a week. It was not generally known that he was absent because a man by the name of Dennis, whose wife he had wronged, was dogging him with no good intent. Marchand had treated the woman's warning with

contempt, but at sight of her injured husband he had himself withdrawn from the scene of his dark enterprises. His malign influence was therefore not at work at the moment.

The tactics of the Lebanon Town Council had been careful and wise. So that the meeting should not be composed only of the roughest elements, they privately urged all responsible citizens to attend, and if possible capture the meeting for law and order and legitimate agitation. That was why Osterhaut, the town-crier, went about with a large dinner-bell announcing the hour of the meeting and admonishing all "good folks" to attend. No one had ever seen Osterhaut quite so cheerful—and he had a bonny cheerfulness on occasion—as on this grisly October day when Nature was very sour and the spirit of the winds was in a "scratchy" mood. But Osterhaut was not more cheerful than Jowett who, in a very undignified way, described the state of his feelings, on receiving a certain confidence from Halliday the lawyer and Gabriel Druse, by turning a cart-wheel in the Mayor's office; which certainly was an unusual thing in a man of fifty years of age.

It was a people's meeting. No local official was on the platform. Under the influence of alien elements who, though their co-operation was directed against the common enemy, were intensely irritating, the meeting became disorderly. One or two wise men, however, were able to secure order long enough to have the resolution passed for forming a Local Interests Committee whose duty it would be to see that the people were not sacrificed to a "soulless

plutocracy." While the names of those who were to form the Committee were being selected, in a storm of disorder arising from the Manitou section of the crowd, the sky overhead grew suddenly brighter and the sun came out, bringing an instant change. It was as though a hand, which had hypnotized them into anger, restored them to good-humour once again.

At this moment, to the astonishment of all, there appeared at the back of the platform between Jowett and Halliday the lawyer, the man with a tragic history who had been as one buried for weeks past, who had vanished from their calculations. It was their old champion, Ingolby. Slowly a hush came over the vast assembly as, apparently guided by his friends on the platform, he was given a seat on the right of the Chairman's table.

A strange sensation, partly pleasure, partly resentment, passed through the crowd. Why did Ingolby come to remind them of better days gone—of his own rashness, of what they had lost through that rashness? Why had he come? They could not say and do all that they wanted with him present. It was like having a row in the presence of a corpse. He had been a hero to all in Lebanon, but he was not in the picture now. His day was done. It was no place for him. Yet it was a pleasant omen that the sun broke clear and shining over the platform as Ingolby took his seat. Presently in the silence he half-turned his head, murmured something to the Chairman, and then got to his feet, stretching out a hand towards the crowd.

For one moment there was silence, a little awe-

stricken, a little painful, and then as from one man a great cheer went up. For a moment they had thought him inconsiderate to come among them in this crisis, for he was no longer of their scheme of things, and must be counted out, a beaten, battered, blind bankrupt. Yet the sight of him on his feet was too much for them. Blind he might be, but there was the personality which had conquered them in the past—brave, adroit, reckless, renowned. None of them, or very few of them, had seen him since that night at Barbazon's Tavern, yet in spite of his tragedy there seemed little change in him. There was the same quirk at the corner of the mouth, the same humour in the strong face, not so ruddy now; and strangely enough the eyes were neither guarded by spectacles, nor were they shrunken, glazed, or diseased, so far as could be seen.

Stretching out a hand Ingolby gave a crisp laugh and said: "So there's been trouble since I've been gone, has there?" The corner of his mouth quirked, his eyelids drooped in the old quizzical way, and the crowd laughed in spite of themselves. What a spirit he had to take it all that way.

"Got a little deeper in the mire, have you, boys?" he added. "They tell me the town's a frost just now, but it seems nice and warm here in the sun. Yes, boys, it's nice and warm here among you all—the same good old crowd that's made the two towns what they are. The same good old crowd," he repeated, "—and up to the same old games!"

At this point he could scarcely proceed for laughter. "Like true pioneers," he went on, "not satisfied with

what you've got, but wanting such a lot more—if I might say so in the language of the dictionary, a deuce of a lot more."

Almost every sentence had been punctuated by cheers. His personality dominated them as aforetime with some new accent to it; his voice was like that of one given up from the dead, yet come back from the wars alive and loving. They never knew what a figure he was until now when they saw and heard him again, and realized that he was one of the few whom the world call leaders, because they have in them that immeasurable sympathy which is understanding of men and matters. Yet in the old days there never had been the something that was in his voice now, and in his face there was a great friendliness, a sense of companionship, a Jonathan and David something. He was like a comrade talking to a thousand other comrades. There was a new thing in him and they felt it stir them. They thought he had been made softer by his blindness; and they were not wrong. Even the Manitou section were stilled into sympathy with him. Many of them had heard his speech in Barbazon's Tavern just before the horseshoe struck him down, and they heard him now, much simpler in manner and with that *something* in his voice and face. Yet it made them shrink a little, too, to see his blind eyes looking out straight before him. It was uncanny. Their idea was that the eyes were as before, but seeing nothing—blank to the world.

Presently his hand shot out again. "The same old crowd!" he said. "Just the same—after the same

old thing, wanting what we all want: these two places, Manitou and Lebanon, to be boosted till they rule the West and dominate the North. It's good to see you all here again"—he spoke very slowly—"to see you all here together looking for trouble—looking for trouble. There you are, Jim Barager; there you are, Bill Riley; there you are, Mr. William John Thomas McLeary." The last named was the butt of every tavern and every street corner. "There you are, Berry—old brown Berry, my barber."

At first the crowd did not quite understand, did not realize that he was actually pointing to the people whom he named, but presently, as Berry the barber threw up his hands with a falsetto cry of understanding, there was a simultaneous, wild rush forward to the platform.

"He sees, boys—he sees!" they shouted.

Ingolby's hand shot up above them with a gesture of command.

"Yes, boys, I see—I see you all. I'm cured. My sight's come back, and what's more"—he snatched from his pocket a folded sheet of paper and held it aloft—"what's more, I've got my commission to do the old job again; to boss the railways, to help the two towns. The Mayor brought it back from Montreal yesterday; and together, boys, together, we'll make Manitou and Lebanon the fulcrum of the West, the swivel by which to swing prosperity round our centre."

The platform swayed with the wild enthusiasm of the crowd storming it to shake hands with him, when suddenly a bell rang out across the river,

wildly, clamorously. A bell only rang like that for a fire. Those on the platform could see a horseman galloping across the bridge.

A moment later someone shouted, "It's the Catholic church at Manitou on fire!"

CHAPTER XXIV

AT LONG LAST

ORIGINALLY the Catholic church at Manitou had stood quite by itself, well back from the river, but as the town grew its dignified isolation was invaded and houses kept creeping nearer and nearer to it. So that when it caught fire there was general danger, because the town possessed only a hand fire-engine. Since the first settlement of the place there had been but few fires, and these had had pretty much their own way. When one broke out the plan was to form a long line of men, who passed buckets of water between the nearest pump, well, or river, and the burning building. It had been useful in incipient fires, but it was child's play in a serious outburst. The mournful fact that Manitou had never equipped itself with a first-class fire-engine or a fire-brigade was now to play a great part in the future career of the two towns. Osterhaut put the thing in a nutshell as he slithered up the main street of Lebanon on his way to the manning of the two fire-engines at the Lebanon fire-brigade station.

"This thing is going to link up Lebanon and Manitou like a trace-chain," he declared with a chuckle. "Everything's come at the right minute.

Here's Ingolby back on the locomotive, running the good old train of Progress, and here's Ingolby's fire-brigade, which cost Lebanon twenty thousand dollars and himself five thousand, going to put out the fires of hate consuming two loving hamulets. Out with Ingolby's fire-brigade! This is the day the doctor ordered! Hooray!"

Osterhaut had a gift of being able to do two things at one time. Nothing prevented him from talking, and though it had probably never been tested, it is quite certain he could have talked under water. His words had been addressed to Jowett, who drew to him on all great occasions like the drafts of a regiment to the main body. Jowett was often very critical of Osterhaut's acts, words, and views, but on this occasion they were of one mind.

"I guess it's Ingolby's day all right," answered Jowett. "When you say 'Hooray!' Osterhaut, I agree, but you've got better breath 'n I have. I can't talk like I used to, but I'm going to ride that fire-engine to save the old Monseenoor's church—or bust."

Both Jowett and Osterhaut belonged to the Lebanon fire-brigade, which was composed of only a few permanent professionals, helped by capable amateurs. The two cronies had their way, and a few moments later, wearing brass helmets, they were away with the engine and the hose, leaving the less rapid members of the brigade to follow with the ladders.

"What did the Chief do?" asked Osterhaut. "Did you see what happened to him?"

Jowett snorted. "What do you think Mr. Max

Ingolby, Esquire, would do? He commandeered my sulky and that rawbone I bought from the Reverend Tripple, and away he went like greased lightning over the bridge. I don't know why I drove that trotter to-day, nor why I went on that sulky, for I couldn't hear good where I was, on the outskirts of the meeting; but I done it like as if the Lord had told me. The Chief spotted me soon as the fire-bell rung. In a second he bundled me off, straddled the sulky, and was away 'fore you could say snakes."

"I don't believe he's strong enough for all this. He ain't got back to where he was before the war," remarked Osterhaut sagely.

"War—that business at Barbazon's! You call that war! It wasn't war," declared Jowett spasmodically, grasping the rail of the fire-engine as the wheel struck a stone and nearly shot them from their seats. "It wasn't war. It was terrible low-down treachery. That Gipsy gent, Fawe, pulled the lever, but Marchand built the scaffold."

"Heard anything more about Marchand—where he is?" asked Osterhaut, as the hoofs of the horses clattered on the bridge.

"Yes, I've heard—there's news," responded Jowett. "He's been lying drunk at Gautry's caboose ever since yesterday morning at five o'clock, when he got off the West-bound train. Nice sort of guy he is. What's the good of being rich, if you can't be decent! Some men are born low. They always find their level, no matter what's done for them, and Marchand's level is the ditch."

"Gautry's tavern—that joint," exclaimed Osterhaut with repulsion.

"Well, that ranchman, Dennis What's-his-name, is looking for him, and Felix can't go home or to the usual places. I dunno why he comes back at all till this Dennis feller gits out."

"Doesn't make any bones about it, does he? Dennis Doane's the name, ain't it? Marchand spoiled his wife—run away with her up along the Wind River, eh?" asked Osterhaut.

Jowett nodded: "Yes, that's it, and Mr. Dennis Doane ain't careful; that's the trouble. He's looking for Marchand, and blabbing what he means to do when he finds him. That ain't good for Dennis. If he kills Marchand, it's murder, and even if the lawyers plead unwritten law, and he ain't hung, and his wife ain't a widow, you can't have much married life in gaol. It don't do you any good to be punished for punishing someone else. Jonas George Almighty—look! Look, Osterhaut!"

Jowett's hand was pointing towards the Catholic church, from a window of which smoke was rolling. "There's going to be something to do there. It ain't a false alarm, Snorty."

"Well, this engine 'll do anything you ask it," rejoined Osterhaut. "When did you have a fire last, Billy?" he shouted to the driver of the engine, as the horses' feet caught the dusty road of Manitou.

"Six months," was the reply, "but she's working smooth as music. She's as good as anything 'twixt here and the Atlantic."

"It ain't time for Winter fires. I wonder what set it going," said Jowett, shaking his head ominously.

"Something wrong with the furnace, I s'pose," returned Osterhaut. "Probably trying the first heat-up of the Fall."

Osterhaut was right. No one had set the church on fire. The sexton had lighted the furnace for the first time to test it for the Winter's working, but had not stayed to see the result. There was a defect in the furnace, the place had caught fire, and some of the wooden flooring had been burnt before the aged Monseigneur Lourde discovered it. It was he who had given the alarm and had rescued the silver altar-vessels from the sacristy.

Manitou offered brute force, physical energy, native athletics, muscle and brawn; but it was of no avail. Five hundred men, with five hundred buckets of water, would have had no effect upon the fire at St. Michael's Church at Manitou; willing hands and loving Christian hearts would have been helpless to save the building without the scientific aid of the Lebanon fire-brigade. Ingolby, on founding the brigade, had equipped it to the point where it could deal with any ordinary fire. The work it had to do at St. Michael's was critical. If the church could not be saved, then the wooden houses by which it was surrounded would be swept away, and the whole town would be ablaze; for though it was Autumn, everything was dry, and the wind was sufficient to fan and spread the flames.

Lebanon took command of the whole situation, and

for the first time in the history of the two towns men worked together under one control like brothers. The red-shirted river-driver from Manitou and the lawyer's clerk from Lebanon; the Presbyterian minister and a Christian brother of the Catholic school; a Salvation Army captain and a black-headed Catholic shantyman; the President of the Order of Good Templars and a switchman member of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament slaved together on the hand-engine, to supplement the work of the two splendid engines of the Lebanon fire-brigade; or else they climbed the roofs of houses, side by side, to throw on the burning shingles the buckets of water handed up to them.

For some time it seemed as though the church could not be saved. The fire had made good headway with the flooring, and had also made progress in the chancel and the altar. Skill and organization, combined with good luck, conquered, however. Though a portion of the roof was destroyed and the chancel gutted, the church was not beyond repair, and a few thousand dollars would put it right. There was danger, however, among the smaller houses surrounding the church, and there men from both towns worked with great gallantry. By one of those accidents which make fatality, a small wooden house some distance away, with a roof as dry as wool, caught fire from a flying cinder. As everybody had fled from their own homes and shops to the church, this fire was not noticed until it had made headway. Then it was that the cries of Madame Thibadeau, who was confined to her bed in the

house opposite, were heard, and the crowd poured down towards the burning building. It was Gautry's "caboose." Gautry himself had been among the crowd at the church.

As Gautry came reeling and plunging down the street someone shouted, "Is there anyone in the house, Gautry?"

Gautry was speechless with drink. He threw his hands up in the air with a gesture of maudlin despair, and shouted something which no one understood. The crowd gathered like magic in the wide street before the house—the one wide street in Manitou—from the roof and upper windows of which flames were bursting. Far up the street was heard the noisy approach of the fire-engine, which now would be able to do little more than save adjoining buildings. Gautry, reeling, mumbling and whining, gestured and wept.

A man shook him roughly by the shoulder. "Brace up, get steady, you damned old geezer! Is there anybody in the house? Do you hear? Is there anybody in the house?" he roared.

Madame Thibadeau, who had dragged herself from her bed, was now at the window of the house opposite. Seeing Fleda Druse passing beneath, she called to her.

"Ma'm'selle, Felix Marchand is in Gautry's house —drunk," she cried. "He'll burn to death—but yes, burn to death."

In agitation Fleda hastened to where the stranger stood shaking old Gautry.

"There's a man asleep inside the house," she said

to the stranger, and then all at once she realized who he was. It was Dennis Doane, whose wife was staying in Gabriel Druse's home: it was the husband of Marchand's victim.

"A man in there, is there?" exclaimed Dennis. "Well, he's got to be saved." He made a rush for the door. Men called to him to come back, that the roof would fall in. In the smoking doorway he looked back. "What floor?" he shouted.

From the window opposite, her fat old face lighted by the blazing roof, Madame Thibadeau called out, "Second floor! It's the second floor!"

In an instant Dennis was lost in the smoke and flame.

One, two, three minutes passed. A fire-engine arrived; in a moment the hose was paid out to the river near by, and as a fireman seized the nozzle to train the water upon the building the roof fell in with a crash. At that instant Dennis stumbled out of the house, blind with smoke, his clothes aflame, carrying a man in his arms. A score of hands caught them, coats smothered Dennis's burning clothes, and the man he had rescued was carried across the street and laid upon the pavement.

"Great glory, it's Marchand! It's Felix Marchand!" someone shouted.

"Is he dead?" asked another.

"Dead drunk," was the comment of Osterhaut, who had helped to carry him across the street.

At that moment Ingolby appeared on the scene. "What's all this?" he asked. Then he recognized Marchand. "He's been playing with fire again," he

added sarcastically, and there was a look of contempt on his face.

As he said it, Dennis broke through the crowd and made for Marchand. Stooping over, he looked into Marchand's face.

"Hell and damnation—you!" he growled. "I risked my life to save you!"

With a sudden access of rage his hand suddenly went to his hip pocket, but another hand was quicker. It was that of Fleda Druse.

"No—no," she said, her fingers on his wrist. "You have had your revenge. For the rest of his life he will have to bear his punishment—that you have saved him. Leave him alone. It was to be. It is fate."

Dennis Doane was not a man of great thinking capacity. If he got a matter into his head it stayed there till it was dislodged, and dislodging was a real business with him.

"If you want her to live with you again, you had better let this be as it is," whispered Fleda, for the crowd were surging round and cheering the new hero.

"Just escaped the roof falling in," said one.

"Got the strength of two, for a drunk man weighs twice as heavy as a sober one," exclaimed another admiringly.

"Marchand's game is up on the Sagalac," declared a third decisively.

The excitement was so great, however, that only a very few of them knew what they were saying, and fewer still knew that Dennis Doane had risked his life to save the man he had been stalking for weeks

past. Marchand had been lying on his face in the smoke-filled room when Dennis broke into it, and he had been carried down the stairs without his face being seen at all.

To Dennis it was as though he had been made a fool of by Fate or Providence, or whatever controlled the destinies of men; as though the dangerous episode had been arranged to trap him into this situation.

Ingolby drew near and laid a hand upon Dennis's arm. Fleda's hand was on the other arm.

"You can't kill a man and save him too," said Ingolby quietly, and holding the abashed blue eyes of Dennis. "There were two ways to punish him; taking away his life at great cost, or giving it him at great cost. If you'd taken away his life, the cost would probably have been your own life; in giving him his life you only risked your own; you had a chance to save it. You're a bit scorched—hair, eyebrows, moustache, clothes too, but he'll have brimstone inside him. Come along. Your wife would rather have it this way; and so will you, tomorrow. Come along."

Dennis suddenly swung round with a gesture of fury. "He spoiled her—treated her like dirt," he cried huskily.

With savage purpose he made a movement towards where Marchand had lain; but Marchand was gone. With foresight Ingolby had quickly and quietly accomplished that while Dennis's back was turned.

"You'd be treating her like a brute if you went to

prison for killing Marchand," urged Ingolby. "Give her a chance. She's fretting her heart out."

"She wants to go back to Elk Mountain with you," pleaded Fleda gently. "She couldn't do that if the law took hold of you."

"Ain't there to be any punishment for men like him?" demanded Dennis, stubbornly yet helplessly. "Why didn't I let him burn! I'd have been willing to burn myself to have seen him sizzling. Ain't men like that to be punished at all?"

"When he knows who has saved him, he'll sizzle inside for the rest of his life," remarked Ingolby. "Don't think he hasn't got a heart. He's done wrong and gone wrong; he has belonged to the sewer, but he isn't all bad, and maybe this is the turning-point. Drink 'll make a man do anything."

"His kind are never sorry for what they do," commented Dennis bitterly. "They're sorry for what comes from what they do, but not for the doing of it. I can't think the thing out. It makes me sick. I was hunting for him to kill him; I was watching this town like a lynx, and I've been and gone and saved his body from Hell on earth."

"Well, perhaps you've saved his soul from Hell below," said Fleda. "Ah, come! Your face and hands are burned, your hair is scorched—your clothes need mending. Arabella is waiting for you. Come home with me to Arabella."

With sudden resolve Dennis squared his shoulders. "All right," he said. "This thing's too much for me. I can't get the hang of it. I've lost my head."

"No, I won't come, I can't come now," said

Ingolby, in response to an inquiring look from Fleda. "Not now, but before sundown, please."

As Fleda and Dennis disappeared, Ingolby looked back towards the fire. "How good it is to see again even a sight like that," he said. "Nothing that the eyes see is so horrible as the pictures that come to the mind when the eyes don't see. As Dennis said, I can't get the hang of it, but I'll try—I'll try."

The burning of Gautry's tavern had been conquered, though not before it was a shell; and the houses on either side had been saved. Lebanon had shown itself masterful in organization, but it had also shown that that which makes enemies is not so deep or great a thing as that which makes friends. Jealous, envious, narrow and bitter, Manitou had been, but she now saw Lebanon in a new light. It was a strange truth that if Lebanon had saved the whole town of Manitou, it would not have been the same to the people as the saving of the church. Beneath everything in Manitou—beneath its dirt and its drunkenness, its irresponsibility and the signs of primeval savagery which were part of its life, there was the tradition of religion, the almost fanatical worship of that which was their master, first and last, in spite of all—the Church. Not one of its citizens but would have turned with horror from the man who cursed his baptism; not one but would want the last sacrament when his time came. Lebanon had saved the Catholic church, the temple of their faith, and in an hour was accomplished what years had not wrought.

The fire at the church was out. A few houses had

been destroyed, and hundreds of others had been saved. The fire-brigade of Lebanon, with its two engines, had performed prodigies of valour. The work done, the men marched back, but with Osterhaut sitting on one fire-engine and Jowett on the other, through crowds of cheering, roaring workmen, rivermen, shantymen, and black-eyed *habitants*. When Ingolby walked past Barbazon's Tavern arm in arm with Monseigneur Lourde, to the tiny house where the good priest lived, the old man's face beaming with gratitude, and with a piety which was his very life, the jubilant crowd followed them to the very door. There the sainted pioneer expressed the feeling of the moment when he raised his hands in benediction over them and said:

"Peace be unto you and the blessings of peace; and the Lord make his face to shine upon you and give you peace now and for ever more."

CHAPTER XXV

MAN PROPOSES

BEFORE sunset, as Ingolby had promised, he made his way towards Gabriel Druse's house. A month had gone since he had left its hospitality behind. What had happened between that time and this day of fate for Lebanon and Manitou?

It is not a long story, and needs but a brief backward look. This had happened:—

The New York expert performed the operation upon Ingolby's eyes, announced it successful, declared that his sight would be restored, and then vanished with a thousand dollars in his pocket. For days thereafter the suspense was almost more than Fleda could bear. She grew suddenly thin and a little worn, and her big eyes had that look of yearning which only comes to those whose sorrow is for another. Old Gabriel Druse was emphatic in his encouragement, but his face reflected the trouble in that of his daughter. He knew well that if Ingolby remained blind he would never marry Fleda, though he also knew well that, with her nature, almost fanatical in its convictions, she would sacrifice herself, if sacrifice was the name for it. The New York expert had prophesied and promised,

but who could tell! There was the chance of failure, and the vanished eye-surgeon had the thousand dollars in his pocket.

Two people, however, were cheerful; they were Ingolby and Jim. Jim went about the place humming a nigger melody to himself, and twice he brought Berry the barber to play to his Chief on the cotton-field fiddle. Nigger Jim, though it was two generations gone which linked him with the wilds of the Gold Coast, was the slave of fanatical imagination, and in Ingolby's own mind there was the persistent superstition that all would be well, because of a dream he had had. He dreamed he heard his dead mother's voice in the room, where he lay. She had called him by name, and had said, "Look at me, Max," and he had replied, "I cannot see," and she had said again, "Look at me, my son!" Then he thought that he had looked at her, had seen her face clearly, and it was as the last time they parted, shining and sweet and good. She had said to him in days long gone, that if she could ever speak to him across the Void, she would; and he had the fullest belief now that she had done so.

So it was that this dreadnought of industry and organization, in dock for repairs, cheerfully awaited the hour when he would be launched again upon the tide of work—healthy, healed and whole. At last there came the day when, for an instant, the bandages could be removed. There were present, Rockwell, Fleda, and Jim—Jim, pale but grinning, at the foot of the bed; Fleda, with her back against the door and her hands clenched behind her as though to

shut out the invading world. Never had her heart beat as it beat now, but her eyes were steady and bright. There was in them, however, a kind of pleading look. She could not see Ingolby's face; did not want to see it when the bandages were taken off; but at the critical moment she shut her eyes and her back held the door, as though a thousand were trying to force an entrance.

The first words after the bandages were removed came from Ingolby.

"Well, Jim, you look all right!" he said.

Swaying as she went, Fleda half-blindly moved towards a chair near by and sank into it. She scarcely heard Jim's reply.

"Looking all right yourself, Chief. You won't see much change in this here old town."

Ingolby's hand was in Rockwell's. "It's all right, isn't it?" he asked.

"You can *see* it is," answered Rockwell with a chuckle in his voice, and then suddenly he put the bandages round Ingolby's eyes again. "That's enough for to-day," he said.

A moment later the bandages were secured and Rockwell stood back from the bed.

"In another week you'll see as well as ever you did," Rockwell said. "I'm proud of you."

"Well, I hope I'll see a little better than ever I did," remarked Ingolby meaningly. "I was pretty short-sighted before."

At that instant he heard Fleda's footstep approaching the bed. His senses had grown very acute since

the advent of his blindness. He held out his hand into space.

"What a nice room this is!" he said as her fingers slid into his. "It's the nicest room I was ever in. It's too nice for me. In a few days I'll hand the lease over again to its owner, and go back to the pigsty Jim keeps in Stormont Street."

"Well, there ain't any pigs in that sty now, Chief; but it's all ready," said Jim, indignant and sarcastic.

It was a lucky speech. It broke the spell of emotion which was greatly straining everybody's endurance.

"That's one in the eye for somebody," remarked Rockwell drily.

"What would you like for lunch?" asked Fleda, letting go Ingolby's hand, but laying her fingers on his arm for a moment.

What would he like for lunch! Here was a man back from the Shadows, from broken hopes and shattered career, from the helplessness and eternal patience of the blind; here he was on the hard, bright highroad again, with a procession of restored things coming towards him, with life and love within his grasp; and the woman to whom it mattered most of all, who was worth it all, and more than all where he was concerned, said to him in this moment of revelation, "What would you like for lunch?"

With an air as casually friendly as her own, he put another hand on the fingers lying on his arm, patted them, and said gaily, "Anything I can see. As a drover once said to me, 'I can clean as fur as I can reach.'"

In just such a temper also they had parted when he went back to his "pigsty" with Jim. To Gabriel Druse he had said all that one man might say to another without excess of feeling; to Madame Bulteel he had given a gold pencil which he had always worn; to Fleda he gave nothing, said little, but the few words he did say told the story, if not the whole story.

"It's a nice room," he said, and she had flushed at his words, "and I've had the best time of my life in it. I'd like to buy it, but I know it's not for sale. Love and money couldn't buy it—isn't that so?"

Then had come days in his own home, still with bandaged eyes, but with the bandages removed for increasing hours every day; yet no one at all in the town knowing the truth except the Mayor, Halliday the lawyer, and one or two others who kept the faith until Ingolby gave them the word to speak. Then had come the Mayor's visit to Montreal, the great meeting, the fire at Manitou, and now Ingolby on the way to his tryst with Fleda. They had met twice only since he had left Gabriel Druse's house, and on the last occasion they had looked each other full in the eyes, and Ingolby had said to her in the moment they had had alone:

"I'm going to get back, but I can't do it without you."

To this her reply had been, "I hope it's not so bad as that," and she had looked provokingly in his eyes.

Now she knew beyond peradventure that he cared for her, and she was almost provoked at herself that

when he was in such danger of losing his sight for ever she had caught his head to her breast in the passion of the moment. Many a time when he had been asleep, with gentle fingers she had caressed his hands, his head, his face; but that did not count, because he did not know. He did, however, know of that moment when her passionate heart broke over him in tenderness; and she tried to make him think, by things said since, that it was only pity for his sufferings which made her do it.

Ingolby thought of all these things, but in a spirit of understanding, as he went to his tryst with her at sunset on the day when Lebanon and Manitou were reconciled.

He met her walking among the trees, very near the place where they had had their first long talk, months before, when Jethro Fawe was a prisoner in the Hut in the Woods. Then it was warm, singing Summer; now, beneath the feet the red and brown leaves rustled, the trees were stretching up gaunt arms to the Winter, the woods were no longer vocal, and the singing birds had fled, though here and there a black squirrel, not yet gone to Winter quarters, was busy and increasing his stores. A ground-hog scuttled across his path. He smiled as he remembered telling Fleda that once, when he was a little boy, he had eaten ground-hog, and she had asked him if he remembered the Gipsy name for ground-hog—*hotchewitchi* was the word. Now, as the shapeless creature made for its hole, it was significant of the history of his life during the past Summer.

How long it seemed since that day when love first peeped forth from their hearts like a young face at the lattice of a sunlit window. Fleda had warned him of trouble, and that trouble had come!

In his mind she was a woman like none he had ever known; she could think greatly, act largely, give tremendously. As he stood waiting, the wonderful, ample life of her seemed to come like a wave towards him. In his philosophy, intellect alone had never been the governing influence. Intellect must find its play through the senses, be vitalized by the elements of physical life, or it could not prevail. There was not one sensual strain in him, but with a sensuous mind he loved the vital thing. He was sure that presently Gabriel Druse would disappear, leaving her behind with him. That was what he meant to ask her to-day—to be and stay with him always. He knew that the Romanys were gathering in the prairie. They had been heard of here and there, and some of them had been seen along the Sagalac, though he knew nothing of that dramatic incident in the woods when Fleda was kidnapped and Jethro Fawe vanished from the scene.

As Fleda came towards him, under the same trees which had shielded her from the sun months ago—now nearly naked and bare—something in her look and bearing sharply caught his interest. He asked himself what it was. So often a face familiar over half a lifetime perhaps, suddenly at some new angle, or because, by chance, one has looked at it searchingly, shows a new expression, a new contour never before observed, giving fresh significance to the

character. There was that in Ingolby's mind, a depth of desire, a resolve to stake two lives against the chances of Fate, which made him look at Fleda now with a revealing intensity. What was the new thing in her carriage which captured his eye? Presently it flashed upon him—memories of Mexico and the Southern United States; native women with jars of water upon their heads; the erect, well-balanced form; the sure, sinuous movement; the step measured, yet free; the dignity come of carrying the head as though it were a pillar of an Athenian temple, one of the beautiful Caryatides yonder by the Ægean Sea.

It smote him as a sudden breath of warm air strikes a face in the night coolness of the veldt. His pulses quickened, he flushed with the soft shock of it. There she was, refined, civilized, gowned like other women, with all the manners and details of civilization and social life about her; yet, in spite of it all, she did not belong; there was about her still something remote and alien. It had not to do with appearance alone, though her eyes were so vivid, and her expression so swift and varying; it was to be found in the whole presence—something mountain-like and daring, something Eastern and reserved and secret, something remote—brooding like a Sphinx, and prophetic like a Sibyl. But suppose that in days to come the thing that did not belong, which was of the East, of the *tan*, of the River Starzke; suppose that it should——

With a great effort he drove apprehension and the instant's confused wonder far away, and when, come

close to him, she smiled, showing the perfect white teeth, and her eyes softened to a dreamy regard of him, all he had ever felt for her in the past months seemed concentrated into this one moment. Yet he did not look like a languishing lover; rather like one inflamed with a great idea or stirred to a great resolve.

For quite a minute they stood gazing as though they would read the whole truth in each other's eyes. She was all eager, yet timorous; he was resolved; yet now, when the great moment had come, as it were, like a stammerer fearing the sound of his own voice. There was so much to say that he could not speak.

She broke the spell. "I am here. Can't you see me?" she asked in a quizzical, playful tone, her lips trembling a little, but with a smile in her eyes which she vainly tried to veil.

She had said the one thing which above all others could have lifted the situation to its real significance. A few weeks ago the eyes now looking into hers and telling a great story were sealed with night, and the mind behind was fretted by the thought of a perpetual darkness. All the tragedy of the past rushed into his mind now, and gave all that was between them, or was to be between them, its real meaning. A beautiful woman is dear to man simply as woman, and not as *the* woman; virtue has slain its thousands, but physical charm has slain its tens of thousands! Whatever Ingolby's defects, however, infinitely more than the girl's beauty, more than the palpitating life in her, than red lips and bright eye, than

warm breast and clasping hand, was something beneath all which would last, or should last, when the hand was palsied and the eye was dim.

"*I am here. Can't you see me?*"

All that he had regained in life in her little upper room rushed upon him, and with outstretched arms and in a voice choked with feeling, he said:

"See you! Dear God—— To see you and all the world once more! It is being born again to me. I haven't learned to talk in my new world yet; but I know three words of the language. I love you. Come—I'll be good to you."

She drew back from him, and her look said that she would read him to the uttermost word in his life's book, would see the heart of this wonderful book; and then with a hungry cry, she flung her arms around his neck and pressed her wet eyes against his flushed cheek.

A half-hour later, as they wandered back to the house he suddenly stopped, put his hands on her shoulders, looked earnestly in her eyes, and said:

"God's good to me. I hope I'll remember that."

"You won't be so blind as to forget," she answered, and she wound her fingers in his with a feeling which was more than the simple love of woman for man. "I've got much more to remember than you have," she added. Suddenly she put both hands upon his breast. "You don't understand; you can't understand, but I tell you that I shall have to fight hard if I am to be all you want me to be. I have got a past to forget; you have a past you want to re-

member—that's the difference. I must tell you the truth: it's in my veins, that old life, in spite of all. Listen. I ought to have told you, and I meant to tell you before this happened, but when I saw you there, and you held out your arms to me, I forgot everything. Yet still I must tell you now, though perhaps you will hate me when you know. The old life—I hate it, but it calls me, and I have an impulse to go back to it even though I hate it. Listen. I'll tell you what happened the other day. It's terrible, but it's true. I was walking in the woods——"

Thereupon she told him of her being seized and carried to the Gipsy camp, and of all that happened there to the last detail. She even had the courage to tell of all she felt there; but when she had finished, with a half-frightened look in her eyes, her face pale, and her hands clasped before her, he did not speak for a minute. Suddenly, however, he seemed to tower over her, his two big hands were raised as though they would strike, and then the palms spread out and enclosed her cheeks lovingly, and his eyes fastened upon hers.

"I know," he said gently. "I always understood —everything; but you'll never have the same fight again, because I'll be with you. You understand, Fleda—I'll be with you."

With an exclamation of gratitude she nestled into his arms.

Before the thrill of his embrace had passed from their pulses, they heard the breaking of twigs under a quick footstep, and Rhodo stood before them.

"Come," he said to Fleda. His voice was as solemn and strange as his manner. "Come!" he repeated peremptorily.

Fleda sprang to his side. "Is it my father? What has happened?" she cried.

The old man waved her aside, and pointed towards the house.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE SLEEPER

THE Ry of Rys sat in his huge arm-chair, his broad-brimmed hat on his knee in front of him. One hand rested on the chair-arm, the other clasped the hat as though he would put it on, but his head was fallen forward on his breast.

It was a picture of profound repose, but it was the repose of death. It was evident that the Ry had prepared to leave the house, had felt a sudden weakness, and had taken to his chair to recover himself. As was evident from the normal way in which his fingers held his hat, and his hand rested on the chair-arm, death had come as gently as a beam of light. With his stick lying on the table beside him, and his hat on his knee, he was like one who rested a moment before renewing a journey. There could not have been a pang in his passing. He had gone as most men wish to go—in the midst of the business of life, doing the usual things, and so passing into the sphere of Eternity as one would go from this room to that. Only a few days before had he yielded up his temporary position as chief constable, and had spent almost every hour since in conference with Rhodo. What he had planned

would never be known to his daughter now. It was Rhodo himself who had found his master with head bowed before the Master of all men.

Before Fleda entered the room she knew what awaited her; a merciful intuition had blunted the shock to her senses. Yet when she saw the Ry on his throne of death a moan broke from her lips like that of one who sees for the last time someone indelibly dear, and turns to face strange paths with uncertain feet. She did not go to the giant figure seated in the chair. In what she did there was no panic or hysteria of lacerated heart and shocked sense; she only sank to her knees in the room a few feet away from him, and looked at him.

"Father! Oh, Ry! Oh, Ry!" she whispered in agony, and admiration, too, and kept on whispering.

Fleda had whispered to him in such awe, not only because he was her father, but because he was so much a man among men, a giant, with a great, lumbering mind, slow to conceive, but moving in a large, impressive way when once conception came. To her he had been more than father; he had been a patriarch, a leader, a viking, capable of the fury of a Scythian lord, but with the tenderness of a peasant father to his first child.

"My Ry! My father! Oh, my Ry of Rys!" she kept murmuring to herself.

On either side of her, but a few feet behind, stood Rhodo and Ingolby.

Presently in a low, firm voice Rhodo spoke.

"The Ry of Rys is dead, but his daughter must stand upon her feet, and in his place speak for him.

Is it not well with him? He sleeps. Sleep is better than pain. Let his daughter speak."

Slowly Fleda arose. Not so much what Rhodo had said as the meaning in his voice, aroused her to a situation which she must face. Rhodo had said that she must speak for her father. What did it mean?

"What is it you wish to say to me, Rhodo?" she asked.

"What I have to say is for your ears only," was the low reply.

"I will go," said Ingolby. "But is it a time for talk?" He made a motion towards the dead man.

"There are things to be said which can only be said now, and things to be done which can only be done according to what is said now," grimly remarked Rhodo.

"I wish you to remain," said Fleda to Ingolby with resolution in her bearing, as she placed herself beside the chair where the dead man sat. "What is it you want to say to me?" she asked Rhodo again.

"Must a Romany bare his soul before a stranger?" replied Rhodo. "Must a man who has been the voice of the Ry of Rys for the long years have no words face to face with the Ry's daughter now that he is gone? Must the secret of the dead be spoken before the robber of the dead——"

It was plain that some great passion was working in the man, that it was wise and right to humour him, and Ingolby intervened.

"I will not remain," he said to Fleda. To Rhodo he added: "I am not a robber of the dead. That's

SHE SANK TO HER KNEES IN THE ROOM A FEW FEET AWAY FROM PERED IN AGONY AND ADMIRATION.

IM, AND LOOKED AT HIM. "FATHER! OH, RY! OH, MY RY!" SHE WHIS-

highfaluting talk. What I have of his was given to me by him. She was for me if I could win her. He said so. This is a free country. I will wait outside," he added to Fleda.

She made a gesture as though she would detain him, but she realized that the hour of her fate was at hand, and that the old life and the new were face to face, Rhodo standing for one and she for the other.

When they were alone, Rhodo's eyes softened, and he came near to her. "You asked me what I wished to tell you," he said. "See then, I want to tell you that it is for you to take the place of the dead Ry. Everywhere in the world where the Romanys wander they will rejoice to hear that a Druse rules us still. The word of the Ry of Rys was law; what he wished to be done was done; what he wished to be undone was undone. Because of you he hid himself from his people; because of you I was for ever wandering, keeping the peace by lies for love of the Ry and for love of you."

His voice shook. "Since your mother died—and she was kin of mine—you were to me the soul of the Romany people everywhere. As a barren woman loves a child, so I loved you. I loved you for the sake of your mother. I gave her to the Ry, who was the better man, that she might be great and well placed. So it is I would have you be ruler over us, and I would serve you as I served your father until I, also, fall asleep."

"It is too late," Fleda answered, and there was great emotion in her voice now. "I am no longer

a Romany. I am my father's daughter, but I have not been a Romany since I was ill in England. I will not go back; I shall go with the man I love, to be his wife, here, in the Gorgio world. You believed my father when he spoke; well, believe me —I speak the truth. It was my father's will that I should be what I am, and do what I am now doing. Nothing can alter me."

"If it be that Jethro Fawe is still alive he is free from the Sentence of the *Patrin*, and he will become the Ry of Rys," said the old man with sudden passion.

"It may be so. I hope it is so. He is of the blood, and I pray that Jethro has escaped the sentence which my father passed," answered Fleda. "By the River Starzke it was ordained that he should succeed my father, marrying me. Let him succeed."

The old man raised both hands, and made a gesture as though he would drive her from his sight.

"My life has been wasted," he said. "I wish I were also in death beside him." He gazed at the dead man with the affection of a clansman for his chief.

Fleda came up close to him. "Rhodo! Rhodo!" she said gently and sadly. "Think of him and all he was, and not of me. Suppose I had died in England —think of it in that way. Let me be dead to you and to all Romanys, and then you will think no evil."

The old man drew himself up. "Let no more be said," he replied. "Let it end here. The Ry of Rys is dead. His body and all things that are his

belong now to his people. Say farewell to him," he added, with authority.

"You will take him away?" Fleda asked.

Rhodo inclined his head. "When the doctors have testified, we will take him with us. Say your farewells," he added, with gesture of command.

A cry of protest rose from Fleda's soul, and yet she knew it was what the Ry would have wished, that he should be buried by his own people where they would.

Slowly she drew near to the dead man, and leaned over and kissed his shaggy head. She did not seek to look into the sightless eyes; the illusion of sleep was so great that she wished to keep this picture of him while she lived; but she touched the cold hand which held the hat upon the knee and the other that lay upon the chair-arm. Then, with a mist before her eyes, she passed from the room.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE WORLD FOR SALE

AS though by magic, like the pictures of a dream, out of the horizon, in caravans, by train, on horseback, the Romany people gathered to the obsequies of their chief and king. For months, hundreds of them had not been very far away. Unobtrusive, silent, they had waited, watched, till the Ry of Rys should come back home again. Home to them was the open road where Romanys trailed or camped the world over.

A clot of blood in the heart had been the verdict of the doctors; and Lebanon and Manitou had watched the Ry of Rys carried by his own people to the open prairie near to Tekewani's reservation. There, in the hours between the midnight and the dawn, all Gabriel Druse's personal belongings—the clothes, the chair in which he sat, the table at which he ate, the bed in which he slept, were brought forth and made into a pyre, as was the Romany way. Nothing personal of his chattels remained behind. The walking-stick which lay beside him in the moment of his death was the last thing placed upon the pyre. Then came the match, and the flames made ashes of all those things which once he called his

own. Standing apart, Tekewani and his braves watched the ceremonial of fire with a sympathy born of primitive custom. It was all in tune with the traditions of their race.

As dawn broke, and its rosy light valanced the horizon, a great procession moved away from the River Sagalac towards the East, to which all wandering and Oriental peoples turn their eyes. With it, all that was mortal of Gabriel Druse went to its hidden burial. Only to the Romany people would his last resting-place be known; it would be as obscure as the grave of him who was laid

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave."

Many people from Manitou and Lebanon watched the long procession pass, and two remained until the last wagon had disappeared over the crest of the prairie. Behind them were the tents of the Indian reservation; before them was the alert morn and the rising sun; and ever moving on to the rest his body had earned was the great chief lovingly attended by his own Romany folk; while his daughter, forbidden to share in the ceremonial of race, remained with the stranger.

With a face as pale and cold as the western sky, the desolation of this last parting and a tragic renunciation giving her a deathly beauty, Fleda stood beside the man who must hereafter be to her, father, people, and all else. Shuddering with the pain of this hour, yet resolved to begin the new life here and now, as the old life faded before her eyes, she turned

to him, and, with the passing of the last Romany over the crest of the hill, she said bravely:

"I want to help you do the big things. They will be yours. The world is all for you yet."

Ingolby shook his head. He had had his Moscow. His was the true measure of things now; his lesson had been learned; values were got by new standards; he knew in a real sense the things that mattered.

"I have you—the world for sale!" he said, with the air of one discarding a useless thing.

GLOSSARY OF ROMANY WORDS

Bosh—fiddle, noise, music.
Bor—an exclamation (literally, a hedge).

Chal—lad, fellow.
Chi—child, daughter, girl.

Dadia—an exclamation.
Dordi—an exclamation.

Hotchewitchi—hedgehog.

Kek—no, none.
Koppa—blanket.

Mi Duvel—My God.

Patrin—small heaps of grass, or leaves, or twigs, or string, laid at cross-roads to indicate the route that must be followed.
Pral—brother or friend.

Rinkne rakli—pretty girl.
Ry—king or ruler.

Tan—tent, camp.

Vellgouris—fair.

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The world for sale,

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Parker, Gilbert
AUTHOR

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